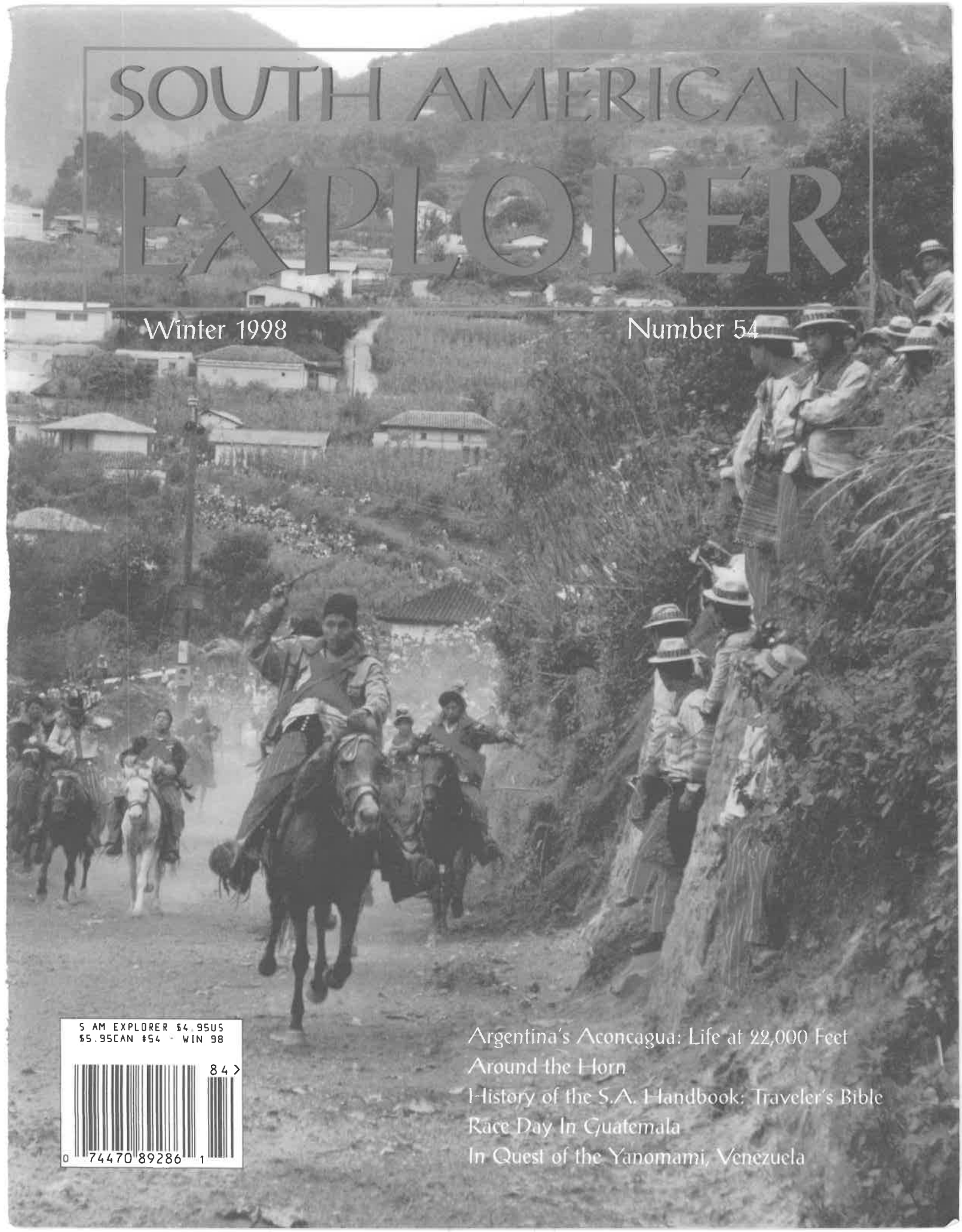

SOUTH AMERICAN EXPLORER

Winter 1998 Number 54

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South American Explorers Club

The South American Explorers Club

is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. With Clubhouses in Quito, Ecuador, and Lima, Peru, and U.S. headquarters in Ithaca, New York, the SAEC collects and makes available to its members up-to-date, reliable information about Central and South America.

Membership is US $40 ($60 couple) per year. Residents outside the U.S. (including Canada and Mexico) add US$7 for postage. Those wishing to sign up in the United Kingdom can join through Bradt Publications (Please allow 4-6 weeks to receive membership cards), 41 Nortoft Road, Chalfont St. Peter, Bucks SL9 OLA, U.K.

Aims and Purposes:
The South American Explorers Club was founded in 1977 to:

- Further the exchange of information among travelers, outdoors people and researchers
- Support scientific field exploration and research in the social and natural sciences
- Promote field sports such as mountaineering, white water running, hiking, caving, biking and others.
- Awaken greater interest in and appreciation for wilderness conservation and wildlife protection.
- Receive contributions for projects aimed at conserving natural resources and improving social conditions in Latin America.

South American Explorer:
A 64-page quarterly magazine with articles on adventure travel, scientific discovery, history, archaeology, mountaineering, native peoples, languages, anthropology, geology, and more.

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Knowledgeable Staff: Our friendly staff and volunteers provide advice and practical information to members.

Networking: We assist members seeking travel companions for a trip/expedition, or seeking to contact experts in a particular field.

Trip Reports: Trip Reports provide specialized information on just about everything—climbing Aconcagua, volunteering, learning Spanish, lining up a local tour operator, white-water rafting, hiking the Darien Gap, visiting the Galapagos, etc.

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Discounts: Members receive discounts from many local tour operators, hotels and language schools.

Additional Member Services at Quito and Lima Clubhouses:
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South American Explorers Club Catalog:
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To join the Club: Contact us at our U.S. headquarters, use the order form on page 63, or sign up at one of the clubhouses.

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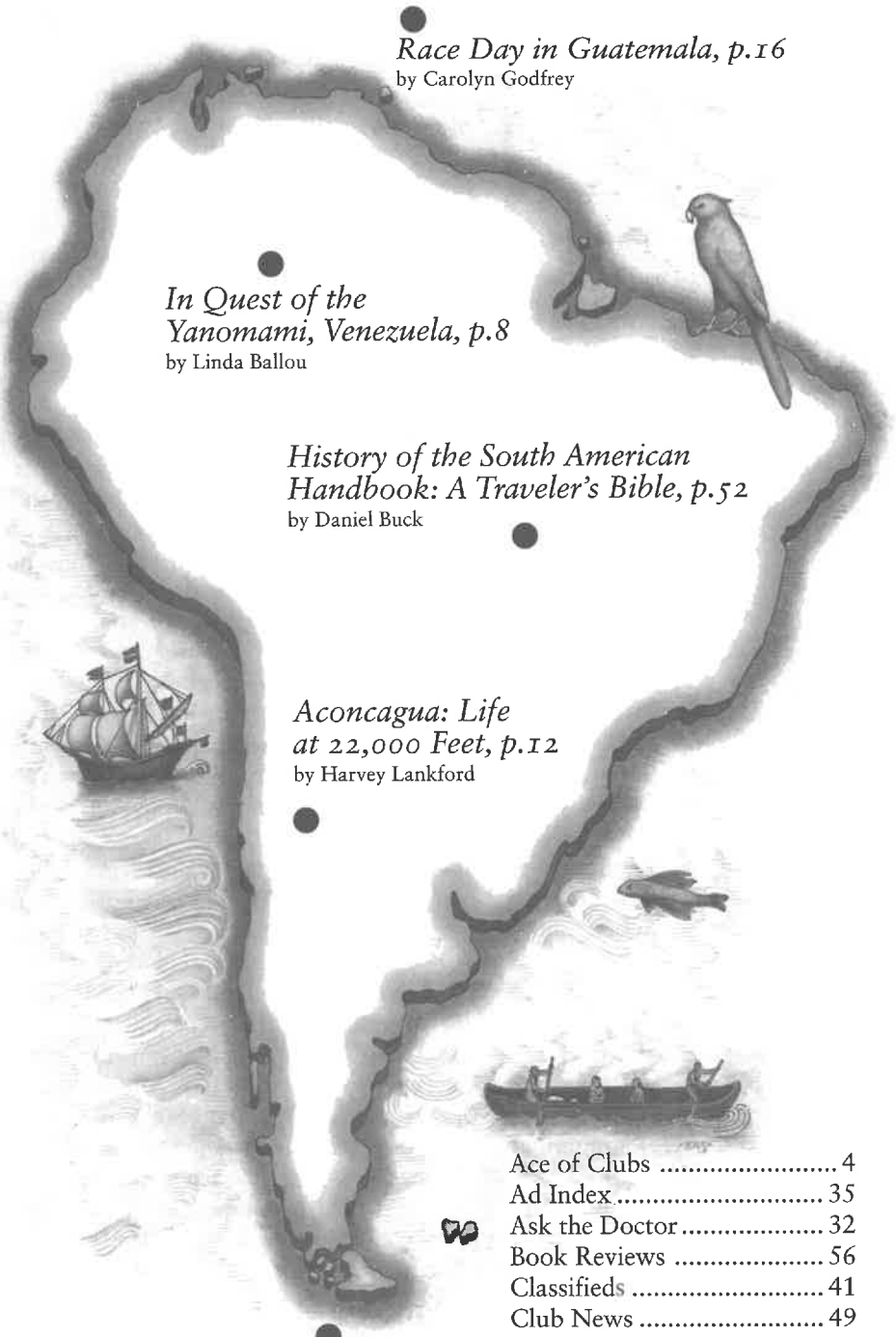

Race Day in Guatemala, p.16
by Carolyn Godfrey

In Quest of the Yanomami, Venezuela, p.8
by Linda Ballou

History of the South American Handbook: A Traveler's Bible, p.52
by Daniel Buck

Aconcagua: Life at 22,000 Feet, p.12
by Harvey Lankford

Around the Horn, p.26
by H. Michael Trapasso

Cover photo by Carolyn Godfrey.
See article page 16.

Ace of Clubs 4
Ad Index 35
Ask the Doctor 32
Book Reviews 56
Classifieds 41
Club News 49
Corner Store 60
Cyberpage 30
From the Road 51
Letters 5
South American Explorers ... 36
Tips & Notes 46

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Older Club members will recall John F Kennedy's famous speech in Berlin at the height of the Cold War and his memorable message of encouragement to the isolated population of Germany's former capital. "Ich bin ein Berliner," he intoned to an enthusiastic crowd, little realizing that what he said in German translates as "I am a jelly doughnut."

Your Club worries when it hears about things like this. Mistakes happen all the time when speaking a foreign language. Indeed, sometimes what gets conveyed is far worse than describing yourself as a doughnut. In a restaurant in Ayacucho, member Marie Breslin once ordered a filet of beach towel. Chris Holmes, another member, while patronizing an Argentine beanery, asked the waiter to bring his wife a carcass of cattle and a goblet of tank sealant. In Chile, a former Club manager at a dude ranch unwittingly offered to disrobe a quarter horse the same day his wife, enthusing over the work of a local artist, gushed that his paintings gave her a joyous burst of gout. Ideally, of course, all SAEC members would speak fluent Spanish, Portuguese, Quechua and the many other tongues spoken throughout South America. Alas, they don't. For many, communication remains a dicey, hit-or-miss affair. A disturbing number of members are reduced to the vagaries of sign language, pidgin English, and smiles to hire a llama, rent a bongo or to quickly locate someone competent to remove a *candiru*.

Given this lamentable situation, it's easy to understand the growing attraction of the new hand-held multi-lingual translators. These remarkable gadgets promise to throw a bridge of comprehension across the linguistic abyss, vault over the isolating barriers to global understanding, and put an electronic Rosetta stone in the palm of your hand. Read the promo material that accompanies these devices and you might well believe that equipped with L'il Jiffy Universal Translators™, two strangers, a Finn and a Korean, say, might sit down over a beer and chat about Gabriel García-Márquez's use of imagery and symbolism in *Love in the Time of Cholera*.

The Club, of course, looks forward to that future day when every dues-paying member will be able to amble into a remote Paraguayan village, click the "Guarani" button on the L'il Jiffy, and knowledgeably engage locals in a lively conversation about famine and other social consequences of crop failure, the use of the stave in peasant revolts, trends in adobe hut decor and interior design, and the timeless simplicity and charm of the rural myth.

Unfortunately, until a compassionate member generously donates a Li'l Jiffy Translator to the Club (call us for a list of models we have our eye on), we cannot provide first-hand, field-tested data on the relative merits of the various brands available. Still, while surfing the 'Net the other day, ever on the lookout for new products for our members, we clicked on Alta Vista's Language Translation site at http://babelfish.altavista.digital.com. "Aha!" we shouted. "Certainly this is something every laptop-toting member needs to know about!"

Given the seminal importance of this matter, we immediately secluded ourselves, unplugged the phones, put the mail on hold, and rebuffed all attempts to contact us for the next several days while we ran exhaustive tests to determine if this web-based translator could live up to the exacting demands of our discerning membership. We are happy to say that though our findings are still preliminary and further testing will be required, the South American Explorers Club can report the following:

In general, the Alta Vista Language Translation web site represents a splendid achievement. Indeed, for business letters, social introductions, idle gossip, small talk, all sports conversations, comments on the weather, placing orders in a restaurant, describing symptoms to the doctor, buying food and clothes in the market, and much more, this is a surprisingly accurate, speedy, and convenient program. Our hats off to Alta Vista for this valuable service which is, moreover, available to all for free. Indeed, if expectations about what the Alta Vista Language Translation site can do are kept within bounds, we are confident that members will find this a most valuable and serviceable tool.

It should go without saying that the Club does not make these observations lightly. To properly evaluate the Alta Vista program, we of course employed the translation-reverse-translation method developed by Messers Jason & Smathers, now universally regarded as the ultimate test of translation software. Simply put, their ingenious technique works like this: Say you want to determine how accurately the program translates a saying found in languages the world over like "If you've got the money,

Continued on page 6

To the Editor:

From what school of yellow journalism did your headline writers for Kevin Haight's article graduate ("Fear and Roading in Paraguay," Issue 53)? Really, now. Why did you use "A body might never be found" and "They just *looked* evil" as a large-font pull quote instead of "Harboring those uncharitable and baseless suspicions" or "I'll make sure no one disturbs you"?

I took that same trip across the chaco some four years ago, met the same paranoid German postulating a CIA presence (I'm sure he also told Kevin about his successful worm farm business in Germany; there are only so many stories, and Estigarribia is a lonely outpost of civilization), and bounced around for some twenty-seven hours from Estigarribia to Santa Cruz. The only drama in that trip came when the driver started drinking and got lost for about a half hour.

I think we travelers from the north mostly forget that while we're storing up our adventure stories of "hellish" trips, we're accompanied on each of these journeys by ordinary South Americans traveling from point A to point B, perhaps to attend a relative's wedding or to sell some ball-point pens. The real adventures, the ones I don't get to read about very often in the *SAE*, are the ones where we strike up a conversation with the very real people riding next to us in the 2-1/2 ton Bolivian stake truck and get to know them.

Best regards,
Jerry Azevedo

To the Editor:

I have discovered that if you wear an SAEC T-shirt, you are treated in an entirely different way.

You see, I can't stand waiting in lines. When you get off the plane, half the time there's a line to get a bus, then a line at Immigration, then lines and delays getting your bags. By the time I get to Customs I'm pretty well "lined-out," as they say.

Not a problem—one glance at my SAEC T-shirt and I get special treatment, waved to an exclusive table where I don't have to wait behind anyone. Of course, I do have to put up with fellow passengers' stares as they walk past me in the Express lines and ogle my wife's intimate garments as Inspectors paw through them, suffer their looks of contempt as dogs sniff our belongings and uniformed personnel attempt to unscrew the top off my deodorant can and squeeze our toothpaste out onto the counter. And it is true that this invariable makes me the last one to get through Customs—frequently resulting in no cabs available or missed connection flights—but the important thing is that I don't have to stand in any lines!

About the *SAE*: more white-water rafting articles and shallow travelogues, please—fewer moribund and sonorous monologues on extraneous trivia.

Humbly yours,
John C. Cutting
President of HUM
(Headquarters of the
Underground Membership)

To the Editor

As a busy high-tech consultant, with barely enough time to devote to the reading of technical journals, let alone the quarterly issue of the *South American Explorer*, I realized a curious phenomenon. Namely, the above-mentioned very busy consultant actually read Issue 53 of the *SAE* from page 1 to page 64. I didn't even skip the advertisements. Did I feel compelled to peruse every single page because I paid my hefty membership dues? Or, did the last issue just happen to have articles in which I was interested? Further recollection, however, revealed the fact that I've read EVERY *SAE* issue from cover to cover.

The truth cannot be ignored; the *SAE* is just damn fun to read! I love it down to the regular matte paper it's printed on. Forget slick glossy magazines—in my hands, the *SAE* feels more like an explorer's notebook, and I always know I'm going to get the unabashed truth—the good, the bad, and the ugly—never with any apologies.

I really don't care that my own painstakingly written article, sent to the *SAE* some three years ago, didn't cut the mustard. Just keep up the great work.

Sincerely,
Charles R. Willcox

Continued on page 7.

Continued from page 4

honey, I've got the time." Use the program to first translate this sentiment into Spanish. What do you get? The Alta Vista translation is "*Si usted tiene el dinero, miel, tengo el tiempo.*" Now, using Alta Vista once again, translate the Spanish back into English and—voila!—you get "If you have the money, honey, I have the time." Close enough! Bravo! Score one for the Alta Vista Translator! No problem. You could make this comment throughout Spanish-speaking South America with confidence that no embarrassing misunderstanding would ensue.

But, all is not quite so sanguine when it comes to other common phrases. For example, suppose you were to brag about your linguistic prowess in the company of cannibals by remarking, "I speak it like a native." This translates as "*Lo hablo tengo gust de un nativo*" or retranslated, "I have the taste of a native one." This observation could spell trouble when it comes to dinner.

Or take endearments, words of wooing, courtship utterances, etc. These are tricky. The wrong combination of words can be tragic. We personally know of a relationship that ended abruptly when a member, taking his cue from an Alta Vista translation, called his girlfriend "*mi poco se zambulló* (my little one plunged)." Of course, he meant to say "my little dove." There are, however, happy exceptions. In fact, some translations border on poetry as, for example, "whisper sweet nothings in my ear" comes back into English as "sweet of the whisper in my ear." This might well work wonders where the English cliché falls awkwardly short.

Threats often lose their punch. If you compare "No more Mr. Nice Guy," a remark that succinctly couples disapproval with a threat to withhold further favors, with the Spanish translation "*No más de individuo de señor Nize*" ("Not more of the individual of Mr. Nize"), you can clearly see the warning in Spanish is considerably less menacing and even borders on the ridiculous.

If threats don't always work, neither does sarcasm. Imagine your audience's reaction should you caustically remark "*¡Grande reparto!* (Big deal!)" If Alta Vista is right, what you've actually said is "Great distribution!"

As a rule we found that praise translates well, as did a whole range of test compliments. Beware of exceptions, however. If tempted to say, "He's a knockout," you might want to know "*El es un golpe de gracia*" literally means "He's a blow of grace."

The Alta Vista Translator is laudably free of prejudice. If you have any doubts about this, you'll be glad to hear that "gay bar" translates as "bar of cheer," all in all, a fortuitous description.

Overall, Alta Vista did remarkably well, overcoming our skepticism and rendering "To be or not to be" without so much as an electronic twitch. Other verbal pitfalls, however, proved insurmountable. It will take a more sophisticated program to translate "the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak." For now, the translation is "*el alcohol está dispuesto pero la carne es débil*" or "the alcohol is arranged but the meat is weak."

A Sampling of Translation Using the Alta Vista Translation Web Site

(http://babelfish.altavista.digital.com)

English Saying	Alta Vista English to Spanish Translation	Alta Vista Spanish to English Translation
You're only as old as you feel.	Usted es solamente tan viejo como usted se siente.	You are only as oid as she feels.
Beat around the bush.	Golpe alrededor del arbusto.	Blow around the shrub.
I've got to hit the road.	Tengo golpear el camino.	I must strike the way.
See you later, alligator.	Véale más adelante, cocodrilo.	More ahead, crocodile.
That's the spirit!	¡Ése es el alcohol!	That one is the alcohol!
Shall I pop over this afternoon?	Hacer estallar concluído esta tarde?	Explode and finish this late?
It doesn't stand a snowball's chance in hell.	No está parada una ocasión del snowball en infierno.	An occasion of snowball in hell is not stopped.
Cut out the monkey business!	¡Corte el negocio del mono!	Court the business of the monkey!
I'll be knocking off at six.	Golpearé apagado a las seis.	I will strike dull to six.
Strike a happy medium.	Pulso un media feliz.	Pulse a happy average.
I'm tossing in the towel.	Estoy sacudiendo en la toalla.	I am shaking in the towel.

Note: If you use the Alta Vista translator and come up with any translations that might pose problems to your fellow members or subject them to embarrassment or ridicule, please send them in.

In every language may we once again thank our members for the dues they pay to keep the Club going. Our special gratitude to those special Contributing, Supporting, Life, and Afterlife members who provide the additional, much-needed largesse that allows the Club to shut down from time to time and study subjects of great import to the membership like the Alta Vista Translator. It's safe to say that without you and your generosity, the South American Explorers Club would not be what it is today.

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Continued from page 5

To the Editor

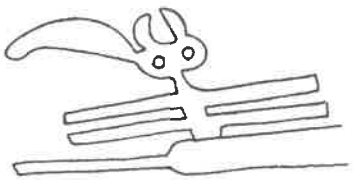
This is just a test to see if anybody reads this section at all. Sure, I know you read Ace of Clubs, the book reviews, and maybe a feature or two...but Letters to the Editor? Now, it wasn't that long ago that this was one of the best-read sections in the whole magazine, sparking comment, giving rise to witty repartee. Whenever a member had an opinion on this or that, a little something he or she wished to impart, a discovery made in the hinterlands or whatever, he/she would sit down and pen a thoughtful account.

No more. All we get these days are little e-mail snippets, e.g. "Good job," "Can you recommend decent lodgings in Filadelphia?" "I forgot to get a yellow fever shot. They wouldn't quarantine me, would they?"

In days of yore, we'd never think of writing our own letter to the editor. There was always a high stack to choose from, letters painstakingly penned in bongos, lengthy epistles meticulously composed by those with time to choose just the right word to express a fleeting thought.

Members, let us bring back this era of literary travel writing. Pause in your frantic travels to write your Club with style and verve. Make us once more proud to publish a dispatch from a cultivated observer of South America. Help us make Letters to the Editor a joy to read, the source for the pithy quote, a feature to be cherished and remembered.

Anonymous



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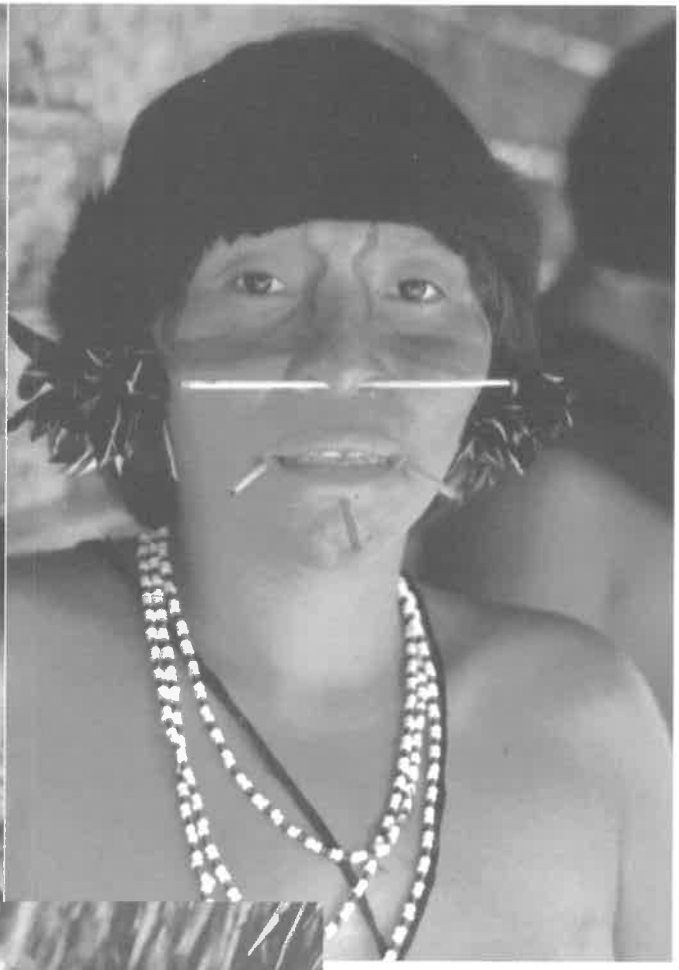


Above left: Chief Enrique's second wife.

Above right: Bettina, head wife of Yanomami chief at Coromototeri.

Left: The great head-gear exchange: the author trades her rain hat for a monkey fur headband.

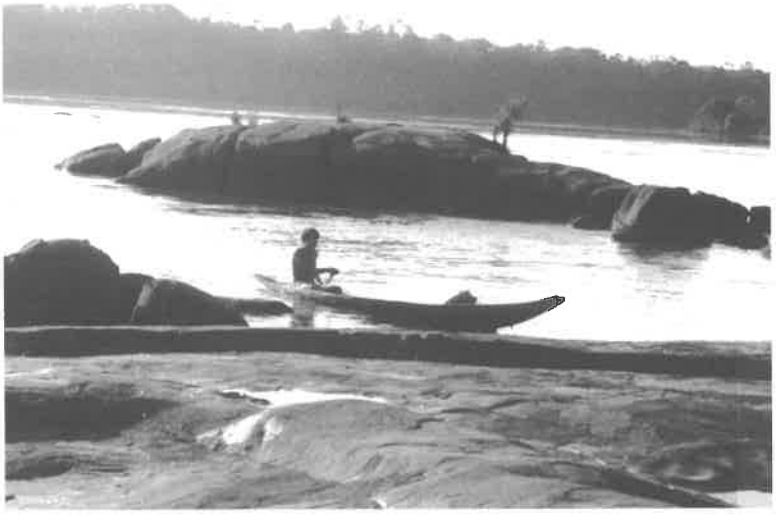
Far right, top: Small dugout canoes, called curiaras, are the Amazonas family car.

Far right, center: A Venezuelan Yannomami woman weaves a basket. Her child has a new safety pin hanging from his beads.

Far right, bottom: Rainbow over the Curripaco village at the mouth of the Pasimoni.

Bongo to Yanomami Land

Linda Ballou



Bettina is on the shore when our boat stops to pick up a Yanomami guide at her village on the banks of the Rio Casiquiare. I admire her figure atop the rock, erect and proud. Slender sticks pierce her nostrils and cheeks, strands of blue and white beads crisscross her gourd-shaped breasts, and she has a length of red cloth wound around the pregnant bulge of her belly. I like the amusement as well as the surprise in her dark eyes at the unexpected arrival of three gringos and two boatmen.

A member of the tribe we are hoping to visit killed her brother.

The tribal chief, Enrique, her husband, is away hunting, Bettina explains. (Taboos prohibit Yanomami from revealing their tribal names, but the taboo doesn't apply to the Spanish names given them by the missionaries.) In her careful mission Spanish, Bettina explains that a member of the tribe we are hoping to visit killed her brother. For this, the Yanomami code demands revenge. Her village is now at war with that tribe and for this reason will not provide a guide to enter their territory.

Certainly there is violence in our so-called civilized world, I muse, but her words give me pause. Just what am I doing in Venezuela's remote Amazonas? What can I learn from one of the last,

Among numerous jobs to support her adventures and travels, Linda Ballou has worked as a snake catcher in India, a magic wand seller with Ringling Brothers Circus, a newspaper reporter, a librarian, and a charter boat cook. Her interest in aboriginal tribal peoples began 30 years ago when she came to know the Irulas of South India. Presently, she lives on an island on the west coast of Florida.

unchanged tribal peoples left on earth? Suddenly, all my lofty sentiments about seeking better ways to live on the planet from stone-age hunter-gatherers seem facile. Maybe these people living in isolation in their rainforest fastness just want to be left alone. Am I just looking to justify another adventure?

But I keep my misgivings to myself and let the momentum of the expedition carry me on. Fortified with cassava bread that feels and tastes like thick cardboard, we follow the river's flow to the mouth of the Rio Pasimoni.

There, at a Curipaco Indian village on a white sand bank, we sling our hammocks for the night and receive instruction from locals on how to shoot darts with an eight-foot bamboo blow gun. It's here we hire two new crewmen, Cacimiro and Antonio, who know the twists and turns of the backwaters we'll be traveling. Cacimiro even speaks a little Yanomami. But what sends me to my hammock wearing a smile the size of the Orinoco is hearing Cacimiro say we'll definitely need a bongo to negotiate the narrow shallows along our route. Bongos—large dugout canoes—live up to my romantic notions of tropical river travel much, much more than the tacky little aluminum craft we've been crammed into for the last four days.

provokes someone on shore to fire a warning shot across our bow

To get a bongo, we detour to San Carlos on the Rio Negro. En route, Nilo proves himself the consummate navigator once again, zigzagging around obstacles in the dense fog. But this morning he does more than avoid the rocks and sandbars when he unwittingly shoots past a government checkpoint, a move that provokes someone on shore to fire a warning shot across our bow. Instantly, Nilo swerves the boat into a careening U-turn. Our vessel swings around and noses in toward the Guardias Nacionales standing on the bank with rifles drawn. We plead our case,

The end of the trail. The point on the Rio Baria at which machetes would no longer cut it.

and at length attention shifts to our belongings. The guards scrutinize everything—one of them even unscrews the cap on each tube of ointment in the medical kit. Only then can we go on our way.

San Carlos boasts a road and three trucks (all with flat tires). José takes us to find food. At a small cafe that serves *empanadas*, the proprietor directs our attention to a squat jar on the rickety table. "*Salsa de hormiga*," he says. Ant sauce. I peer in and sure enough, it's a red and black paste with lots of little ant heads and bodies in it, as though a division of ants crawled in and drowned. I try a spoonful. It's piquant. In no time, I'm dunking my empanadas directly into the jar, much to the delight of the men at the next table. Only later do I discover that *salsa de hormiga* is a renowned aphrodisiac.

Getting hold of a bongo proves easier than I expect. Getting out of San Carlos, on the other hand, is another story. José and Nilo arrive in a thirty-two-foot dugout, but before we can load our gear, two guardsmen stride down the hill to announce we won't be going anywhere without their permission. Of course, they already examined our passports and permits when we first arrived, but now they rummage through our belongings and confiscate three of our finest machetes. I seethe throughout this hot, tedious ordeal but dare not reveal my rage, having heard of travelers being arrested for less.

As we leave San Carlos astern, my mood is as dark as the tannin-stained waters of the Rio Negro. Still I am too pleased at being aboard a real bongo to stay grumpy for long.

The railings and canopy roof of our bongo, *Yatua*, are painted in the gay colors of tropical fruit: avocado, papaya, and banana. It's delightful to have a roof over our heads, to freely move about as we travel, or to climb up on top for a change of view.

Even with the outboard clamped incongruously on her stern, *Yatua* moves at a leisurely pace. It took us two hours to reach San Carlos this morning. The return trip will take us more than five.

The village at Boca Pasimoni glows under the arc of a double rainbow. We pause here only long enough to pick up our Curipaco crew and a

Dear Don:

I'm so pleased that you are considering my article for publication. I hope I can allay your concerns regarding my own travels to the Yanomami territory.
The Alto Orinoco-Casiquiare Biosphere Reserve is a restricted area requiring special permits for travel. We had these permits, issued by the Oficina Regional de Asuntos Indigenas (Bureau of Indian Affairs) in Caracas. The permits are not generally issued to private parties unless they are travelling with a registered guide. We were.

There are *acabalos*, Venezuelan National Guard checkpoints, at strategic points along the rivers where passports and permits are checked scrupulously. In my article, I mention an incident where we inadvertently passed an *acabalo* in the fog and a guard fired a shot across our bow. Attempting to travel illegally in the area would be foolhardy to say the least.

Perhaps I should mention that I am a member of the Florida Anthropological Society and a former member of Cultural Survival, an organization that supports and protects indigenous people. I was not traveling under the auspices of either of these groups. I bring up my affiliation only to illustrate that I am aware of and sensitive to indigenous issues and seek interaction with tribal people without exploitation. In the planning stages of the trip, I lost sleep over the concern that my visit might be intrusive or detrimental. In retrospect, I don't believe that it was.

We were not participating in an expensive organized tour. As far as some of the money spent getting there benefitting the community, I can't honestly tell you that it did. However, a good deal of research went into deciding what gifts to bring to the Yanomami. We tried to make it a balance of what they need and what they want. Knives, machetes, and fishing tackle, for example, are difficult and expensive for the Yanomami to obtain. Red cotton cloth and beads, on the other hand, are things the Yanomami ask for and desire. Supposedly the cost of our permits goes toward tribal welfare, but as with bureaucracies anywhere, who knows?

I prepared an educational display for my county library system on the Yanomami after my return and worked with school teachers to create a lesson plan on the tribe and the problems they face. I think sharing information and rasing awareness are important ways of helping the Yanomami.
Incidentally, there's a difference of opinion about whether to say "Yanomami" or "Yanomamö" or "Yanomama." Some people get downright dogmatic about it. I use "Yanomami" only because when I asked a number of Indians,"Yanomami" is how they pronounced it—they laughed when I said "Yanomamo."

I hope this helps you feel more comfortable about running my article. If there's anything else I can do, please let me know.

Best regards,
Linda Ballou

Continued on page 18

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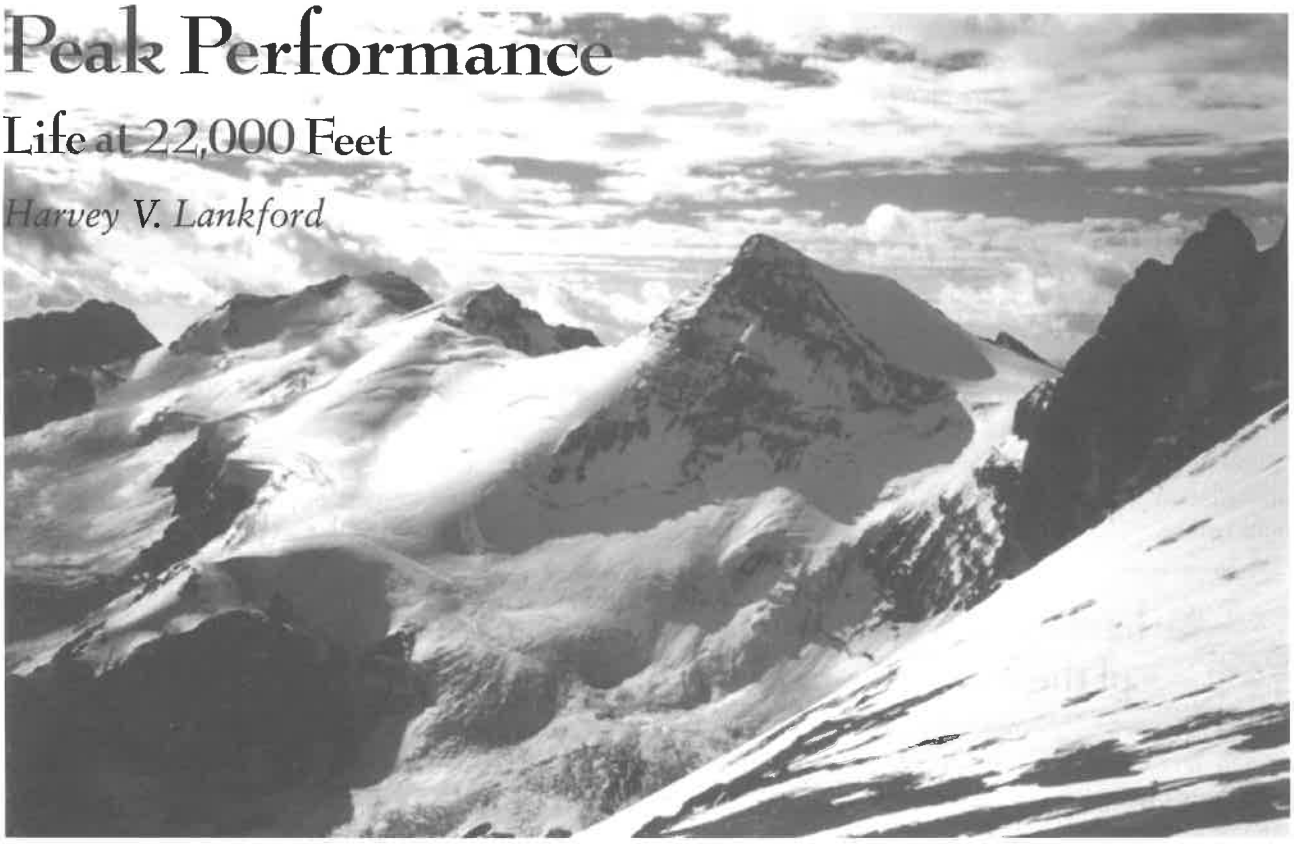
Physician Harvey Langford on the right. Priest Remi Sojka on the left. West side of Aconcagua.

Our tent at Camp Alaska 17,000" (favorite campsite). Cerro Cuerno in background to the left.

Peak Performance

Life at 22,000 Feet

Harvey V. Lankford



View to northwest (Cerro Cuerno) taken from Camp Alaska 17,100' on Aconcagua.

Going to the mountains is incomprehensible to many people and inexplicable by those who go. The reasons are difficult to unearth and only to those who are similarly drawn is there no need to try to explain.—Joe Tasker

With Aconcagua visible in the distance, my friend Remi and I stroll along the gravel roadbed, have our picture taken by a Brazilian family, and like them, relax as if we're on vacation. When not climbing mountains, Remi is a priest with St. Bridget's Catholic Church in Richmond. I'm a bored endocrinologist. We both share a passion for mountain climbing.

Crossing the Horcones River on a new 300-foot-long suspension bridge, the trail narrows and steepens. It is nothing bad, but above 9,000 feet, I note in my logbook it's "grueling." This is a gross exaggeration, but the rest of the entry is closer to reality—"First day hot. 70 degrees, feeling my age." I feel a few minor aches, which, once I get into the groove, I ignore, like I have on other trips. Any further whining you come across in the rest of this story is just color. All but armchair travelers know pain is expected and well compensated.

After knee surgery in 1994, Harvey V. Lankford rejected his orthopedist's recommendation to play the alternative "sport" of golf. This November, he will be presenting scientific measurements from Aconcagua to a conference at the Medical College of Virginia.

I'm a bored endocrinologist.

We see some nasty lenticular cloud, also called cap or crest clouds, over the Piramidal. These form over ridges or peaks as ascending moisture cools to the saturation point. Their windswept origin is of special interest to climbers. Winds up to 50 mph above 18,000 ft are by definition steering currents, winds above 50 mph are jetstream, and lenticulars form on the open-ended scale above that. The one we see today is the evil *Viento Blanco*.

We reach Ibanez, a small campsite at 12,992 ft. The site also serves as a brief rest stop for two quiet Italians in faded red climbing suits. We met them down below the day before, slowly clomping along in their awkward double boots. We also meet two brothers, guides for OTT (Out There Trekking). They are Californians, eccentric, yakking away with us while their meek clients herd together like sheep.

Day three. Our five-hour climb to Plaza de Mulas base camp at 14,000-ft. seems slow. No matter. We reach the glacial moraine, where we plan to rest a day.

A word about the effects of altitude: At 14,000 ft, atmospheric oxygen levels are already down by a third, at 18,000 down by half. It gets even worse higher up. Acclimatization is the adjustment to hypoxia—low oxygen levels in the blood. Full acclimatization can take many weeks. A wringing headache, nausea, lightheaded-ness, and a strange, dream-like sense of reality signal incomplete acclimatization or Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS)—the forerunner of more serious problems and ultimately death. Remi and I follow the rule of thumb "climb high, sleep low," always making sure to camp no more than an average of 1,000 ft above our camp of the night before.

We have become creatures of the mountain.

On our two previous expeditions, Remi had so much trouble breathing that I feared he might be prone to cold-induced asthma or High Altitude Pulmonary Edema (HAPE). To prepare for Aconcagua, he'd undergone an extensive medical check-up and sought the advice of three experts, a pulmonologist, a renowned climbing physician and authority, and a Himalayan Rescue physician. All recommended a combination of steroids (inhaled) for asthma and oral nifedipine to block hypoxia-induced pulmonary vasospasm. Their counsel will soon be put to the test.

At Plaza de Mulas, a city of forty tents and a sizeable population of mules, we carefully pump our water through an iodinated filter. It is soon our home, base camp, a safe haven. Because of its location, radiophones sometimes work at Plaza de Mulas. Trekking companies set up their tents for the summer and dig latrines. Climbers from around the world gather here, check-in, and pitch camp below the Cerro Cuerno glacier.

We will spend three nights at Plaza de Mulas. From here on up, we'll go expedition style: carry our supplies up the mountain, cache them, and turn around to spend the night at lower altitude. Later, we will haul up the rest of our gear and camp at the new height. This way, we will move our supplies up the mountain while our bodies adapt to progressively higher altitudes. We are adjusting well. Carrying up the second load takes no more time than the first, despite blowing billows of snow and a 40 mph headwind that knifes through our clothes.

Now he must give up his dream or his feet.

We have a choice of campsites: Canada at 16,000 ft, Camp Alaska at 17,100, or Nido de Condores at 17,600. All three are flat and meet our needs. Because of its exposed location, Alaska is not a favorite, but Remi and I love it. From our perch at Alaska, looking straight up the Gran Acarreo, the summit appears tantalizingly close. We carefully secure multiple lines to firmly tether our North Face tent. We are just as meticulous setting up the stove which will get heavy use for more than cooking. At altitude, it takes 20 minutes to melt snow for a liter of hot water. Despite the effort, hot liquids are vital in the cold.

Our lone tent is a magnet, attracting climbers on their way up or down. They tell us a lot about themselves, climbing conditions, their successes and failures. We congratulate the ones who made it to the top. They're usually in a big hurry to get the hell off of the mountain. It's up to Remi and me to give advice to those with no business being here—the inexperienced.

We meet a colorful bunch. Climbers all, carried away by the scenery and a sense of camaraderie, we have be-

View to northeast from Camp Berlin 19,500' on Aconcagua

Aconcagua summit 22,841' telephoto shot from Camp Berlin 19,500'

come creatures of the mountain, lost to our former lives. A haggard solo-climbing Spaniard stumbles in. After summitting, he lost his only lighter. Unable to use his stove to melt snow, he hasn't had a drink in more than 24 hours. I find such slipshod preparation an anathema. I packed three different lighters. True, none of them work above 14,000 ft, but I also brought along two types of matches for backup, and they do. Things could have gone badly for our Spanish friend, but after a quick swig of our water, he's on his way. Equally ill equipped are the two Americans we meet on their way up. With still a long way to go, they are already running low on food. An Austrian with cold feet wears regular hiking boots rather than double mountaineering boots. He climbed this high gambling to find the route free of snow, as it sometimes is. Now he must give up his dream or his feet. Some climbers we meet naively hope to summit and return in a mere three days. And hardly anyone carries wands, the little flags that can save a climber in a whiteout. It all brings to mind the memorable words of Ben Franklin: "A little neglect may breed mischief...for want of a nail, the shoe was lost; for want of a shoe, the horse was lost; and for want of a horse, the rider was lost..."

This year, nine climbers have died on Aconcagua.

We watch an assistant ranger lug a strange metal canister up the mountain. Not yet acclimated, he kneels on the trail and pukes. His boss, Elio, a fifteen-year veteran policeman from Mendoza, stops by. He tells us that so far this year, nine climbers have died on Aconcagua. The canister is for hauling down the body of a freshly dead Polish climber still on the summit.

I'm either too cold or too hot, usually too hot. The continual zipping and unzipping is annoying, but extreme gear is vital for survival in the cold and the wind. My wind gauge registers 50-mph-plus winds. This is almost the norm. I finally give up measuring the wind speed. Climbing above Nido, I find much of the route swept bare. I barrel into Camp Berlin at 19,500 ft at the fast (for me) clip of 500 ft/hr.

Berlin is a blur. I am tired. My head aches from the altitude. Remi and I cache our load and speed back down. This is one of the rare times I outpace Remi, getting down in an hour as opposed to the five going up. Back at Alaska for a third night, I slump in the tent, my head no longer aching at the lower altitude.

Our acclimatization plan calls for a second night at Alaska. It's now that I wonder why I'm here in the first place and if I'll ever be crazy enough to ever try something like this again. But Alaska is soothing and familiar—a good place to rest and give in to a little summit fever. The next day beckons.

We leave Alaska on this cloudy, snowy day and head back up to Berlin. I go slower this time on purpose, taking an extra hour to cover the route. No one reached the summit yesterday or today. We are the next wave coming up for a try.

At Berlin, our highest campsite, the views surpass Alaska's, but my altitude sickness is more intense. It takes us two long hours just to lash down the tent in bullet-proof fashion. My head throbs from the effort. For the first time, I score a 3, the highest figure on the Lake Louise Acute Mountain Sickness scale. I lie down in the tent. Towards evening, I feel better, but Remi is only so-so. There's a lassitude that sets in with altitude. We let things slide, eating less, not drinking enough. Letting things slide is easy when dishing up a simple meal or melting ice is a three-hour chore. While picking at our favorite meal of ham and eggs, we knock over a pot of hot water. We don't bother to mop it up. Downing hydrocodone pain relievers, we sack out. No summit tomorrow. We've allowed for six days in Berlin to rest. We wait for a window in the weather.

Day two at Berlin is good and bad. I slept well, my

Continued on page 22

A Day at the Races

Carolyn Godfrey

They're off! The crowd roars.

Marimba melodies fill the misty, chilly air. In the distance, the Cuchumatanes, Central America's highest mountains, are still barely visible.

Eager to catch a glimpse, excited spectators lean over the wooden railing, their hats a festive line of straw boaters. On either side of the dirt road, men clad in red- and white-striped trousers stretch out into the distance, seemingly forever. They sport immense, five-inch, pink, blue and red embroidered collars over their white pin-striped shirts. Straw hats complete the festive holiday attire of the Guatamaltecas attending the race.

Against a mud-smeared stone wall, a toddler no more than three, all dressed up like the men—striped trousers, shirt, boater, the lot—leans nonchalantly, hands in pockets.

a day for heavy drinking

The town of Todos Santos (All Souls Day), celebrates this holiday with fervor. A festival tradition calls upon the living to honor the dead and give thanks to the saints. Families tend graves, lighting candles and putting out food. Indian religious beliefs blend with the Catholi-

Carolyn Godfrey is a 34-year-old former Elementary teacher who, seized with wanderlust at twenty-five, trained as a TESOL teacher and spent the last nine years traveling. She taught for two years in Iceland and Finland, but spent the other seven years wandering the world solo.

cism of the conquistadors to create colorful mayhem.

A somewhat less traditional event on this day is the horse race—if one can call it that. This is a day for heavy drinking—as it is in so many festivals around the world.

Suddenly, the crowd snaps to attention. A thundering of hooves. They're off! The crowd roars. I strain against the wooden rail to get a better view.

It is a privilege to compete in such a race. *Caballero* means "gentleman," a derivation of *caballo* or "horse." To race a horse on All Souls Day is to be a man. If there's a racing etiquette at all, it seems to require the racer to:

1. Get a horse. This is not so easy. For the money to hire a mount, a man must work for three months on the coast.
2. Knock back as much beer as possible.
3. Do whatever you can to stay in the saddle.

The horses pound by in a dusty cloud. The beer flows freely. During the first few laps, most horses have riders, but as the race heats up, horsemen lean from their saddles to snatch beer offered by well-wishers. Frequent pit stops eventually take their toll. Before long, stirrups flop free, boaters spin to the dirt, gaily feathered plumes get trampled under foot.

Horses snort, sweat streaks heaving flanks, steam rises from twitching backs.

Horses snort, sweat streaks heaving flanks, steam rises from twitching backs. Drunken riders slumped low on their steeds try to round the curves, but soon one, and then another, and another, is thrown headlong onto the railing or slips bleary-eyed from his horse. Wood splinters. Senseless and bleeding, horsemen writhe in the dust while friends and family rush to haul their fallen champions away from the clattering hooves.

I cover my eyes with my hands, a gesture of squeamishness that provokes the amusement of my neighbor. "You should have been here fifty years ago," he mocks gleefully. "In those days, they sacrificed children to the gods."

Things have gotten tamer over the years. Not that long ago, in a gruesome spectacle, they tied chickens across the track, and riders competed to see how many heads they could knock off at full gallop. On reflection, maybe a few riders falling off their horses is nothing to get upset about.

Up the hill, outside the church, a woman swings a metal tin—a makeshift censor. The pungent smoke of burning scented wood wafts through the ancient doorway, warding off evil spirits. Shrouded wisps vanish into another world though the haze lingers milkily over the steps.

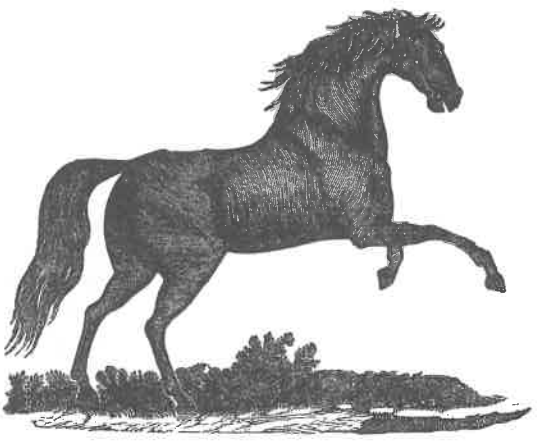
The tranquility is suddenly shattered. Firecrackers are another tradition to scare away evil powers—the louder the better.

Dancing men decked out in colorful costumes fill the plaza. Gold, red, and green masks with wild tassels muffle their laughter. They, too, are keeping the evil spirits at bay, dancing them away. To the strains of the marimba, the dancers shuffle in their embroidered britches, laboriously lifting one leg after the other in a slow, drunken lurch as if wading through mud. With masks pushed back and bottles raised high, the dancers gulp beer, the foam dribbling down their chins, staining their puffed red and green shirts.

horsemen writhe in the dust

Loyal wives clutching their toddlers tend to their senseless partners. They will stay the night, shivering and hungry, watching over their erstwhile *caballeros* in their drunken stupor. The women have already endured months of separation and hardship while their men labored on the coast. Hunkered down in the dirt, patiently, resignedly waiting once more, how do they feel, the spectacle over, the money gone?

With the dawn, somber figures converge on the cemetery. They huddle around the graves, silently placing their offerings of food among the candles. Two men softly strum guitars. Gone are the firecrackers and revelry. Now is the time for ceremony, the solemn rites of All Souls Day—though the marimba plays on.



couple of pineapples. Then the young muscular Antonio takes over as motorman, giving Nilo a well-deserved rest. The handsome Antonio rarely smiles. We discover why, later on, when he yawns, revealing a pink pair of toothless gums.

In the bow, Cacimiro guides the bongo around obstacles with his heart-shaped paddle, now and then pausing for a scoop of river water to make the manioc gruel he swills throughout the day. He totes an ancient shotgun lashed together with wire. Picking up faint bird sounds not audible to the rest of us, he signals Antonio to pull over to the bank. Then quickly and silently, he stalks into the jungle, fires a single shot, and returns with a *pava*, a blue-faced crested bird the size of a chicken. The *pava* is destined for the stew pot at the end of the day.

Entering virgin jungle, we camp on the riverbanks, hanging our hammocks and mosquito nets beneath tarps suspended from trees. One night Cacimiro leads us to an abandoned Indian fish camp where a couple of low thatch tent-like huts stand on a flat granite outcrop next to some fish-drying racks. Although we share these quarters with the insects and lizards already in residence, we stay cozy and dry during a downpour that lasts much of the night.

In the morning, my belly full of a breakfast of grilled piranha, I bask on the warm rocks, and daydream about a life in the rainforest. I imagine myself weaving baskets, gathering jungle fruit, paddling a small dugout up hidden creeks, wearing orchids in my hair, and visiting Bettina and her new baby. I want to stay where I am, but the others are calling.

Our route takes us up rivers that dwindle into streams, then creeks. We no longer see pairs of macaws flying overhead nor hear the chatter of green parrots. But blue morpho butterflies, their color and proportions larger than life, flutter lazily across our bow.

escorted by pale river dolphins

"It's like a dream," I remark to no one in particular. "Yeah, but a wet one," says Mike, pointing to the water seeping into our dugout. We find an empty oil tin and take turns bailing, repetitious work that sets a rhythm to the journey. Bongos have neither seams nor joints, but holes come about when the log is hollowed out. Though holes are plugged later on, water still manages to trickle in.

Escorted by pale river dolphins, we reach the Rio Baria. On even our best maps, it shows up as a vague squiggle losing itself in uncharted tributaries crossing into Brazil. Somewhere out there live the Yanomami we're seeking.

I find my underwear chewed into confetti by leaf-cutter ants.

The Baria snakes back and forth so often we seem to be going in

circles. Clusters of palm trees form little islands with barely enough water to pass. Low-lying banks close in around us. Tree branches along the river's edge sag under their colorful burden of orchids and bromeliads. Though the air is dank and oppressive, a compelling primeval beauty prevails.

Swarming clouds of mosquitos and *jejenes*, a particularly noxious biting gnat, are thick and ravenous. Our tightly woven mosquito netting can't keep them out. At night, scratching, tossing, and turning, I dislodge a bundle of clothing stashed at the foot of my hammock. In the morning, I find my underwear and socks strewn about on the ground, chewed into confetti by leaf-cutter ants. I look down to see a line of ants retreating single file into the bush, each waving a little white flag of cotton snipped neatly from my sports bra.

The uncontacted Yanomami tribe would remain hidden from our curious eyes.

Antonio noses the dugout slowly through the coffee-colored water, guided by hand signals from Cacimiro in the bow. Months of torrential rains have left a legacy of collapsed banks, snarled branches, and a tangle of toppled trees.

At one point, a gigantic web of trees crisscross the river, a vast thicket that blocks our way. It looks impenetrable to me, but Cacimiro is already chopping at one of the tree trunks with his machete. Chips fly, and the dense tropical hardwood rings like a gong under the blows. At the same time, Nilo hangs monkey-like from the branches of one tree while hacking at the limbs of another. With all of us pitching in we eventually clear away enough obstacles to push and pull and squeeze the bongo through. We labor on through more logjams until finally even Cacimiro admits that machetes alone are not enough. We pose for a group portrait before turning around. In the photograph each of us is grinning broadly, even the toothless Antonio. Everyone holds a prop of some sort—Cacimiro a machete, Antonio a string of fish, Jose the old shotgun on his shoulder. I am holding onto the bongo's mango-colored railing as if clasping the arm of an old friend.

The uncontacted Yanomami tribe would remain hidden from our curious eyes. Though I never admit it to the others, I am secretly pleased.

On the way back Mike and Rick and I stay on at the Yanomami village of Coromototeri for a couple of days while Jose and Nilo take the bongo back to San Carlos.

We give Bettina's people all the goods we brought as offerings to their enemies.

Bettina is there. She comes down to meet us at the landing, this time with her husband, the chief. "Leenda!" she shrieks, and we beam at each other like long-lost friends.

We now give Bettina's people all the goods we brought as offerings to their enemies. We hand over knives, fish hooks, our remaining machetes, and bolts of red cloth. In return, we are given a hut to sleep in and the run of the village. We can even enter huts of the chief's extended family.

Bettina hustles me off. In her windowless hut, before my eyes adjust to the dark, I step on some hot coals. In pain, I hop around on one foot while Bettina and the other women howl with laughter. When I finally settle down, it's time for a make-over. I decline their offer to poke sticks through my nose, but I'm open to parrot feathers. Patiently, the women pare down the quills of some chartreuse feathers until they fit the small holes of my pierced ears. Soon I have plumes in each earlobe. Only now, apparently, am I fit for public display.

plagued by an insect that lays its eggs under the skin.

Decked out in my new green feathers, I let Bettina take me "shopping." My currency is the beads and safety pins I have brought along as personal trade goods. I was doubtful back in Florida when Rick proposed bringing safety pins, but his suggestion was inspired. The Yanomami, even in areas around the missions, wear little clothing but they are plagued by an insect that lays its eggs under the skin. It turns out a safety pin is a better than a sharpened bamboo stick for digging them out. It is also easily clipped to a bead necklace when not in use.

My pins and beads are in high demand, and I do a brisk business, trading my goods for baskets, agouti-tooth knives, and bamboo arrow-point quivers. One man I traded with comes back. He looks embarrassed. Finally, he makes clear he wants his quiver back. Is this what they mean by "Indian giving," I wonder, but I hand it over anyway. He quickly pulls the snakeskin cover off, extracts some slimy tobacco leaves from amongst the arrow-points, and pops this wad in his mouth between teeth and lower lip. This done, he bashfully returns the quiver.

During it all, Bettina stands quietly to the side. I can't help but notice how her eyes return again and again to the red rain hat I use to carry my beads and pins. Finally, I empty the hat and hold it out to her. Drawing closer, she takes off her monkey fur headband and places it on my head. In return, I put the hat over her neatly cropped hair. The exchange complete, we grin at one another, each certain she's gotten the best of the deal.

He blows hallucinogenic snuff up his nostrils to summon the spirits.

The Tribal shaman, or *shapori*, seems particularly intrigued by our presence. Grinning widely, his lower lip stuffed with the ubiquitous wad of tobacco and his face painted in a broad red mask, he follows us everywhere. He carries a length of thin cane. With this, he blows hallucinogenic snuff up his nostrils to summon the spirits that reside in his chest. Mike accepts his offer to try some snuff, but only succeeds in summoning up the great headache spirit.

The Yanomami, after all, are known for suddenly turning upon their guests with murderous rage.

Later the children and I bathe in the Casiquiare. They find my glasses hilarious and take turns trying them on. My shampoo is also a big hit. I dole out dabs to the children and the more daring women. In all, we enjoy a fine communal lathering here in the river.

During the night the chanting of the *shapori's* wakes us up. He drones on for hours. At first he sounds alarmingly contentious, even belligerent, and I feel a small shiver of fear go through me. The Yanomami, after all, are known for suddenly turning upon their guests with murderous rage. But after a while, I get used to the thunderous outbursts and even find the rhythm spellbinding.

I listen closely to see if I can make out anything of what he—or the spirits—are saying. Thanks to the list of Yanomami vocabulary that Rick put together, I memorized a number of words. Still, for a long time I understand nothing. Then slowly I pick out the odd word here and there. Finally I hear a pattern.

"*Napu...hapo...parawa...tote hiwa...tote hiwa.*" The shaman repeats his words, like a refrain.

Suddenly, there in my hammock, I know with utter certainty the meaning of the *shapori's* chant. "He's saying," I whisper into the darkness, "'The river has brought the strangers; it is good, it is good.'"

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head feels fine, but Remi is worse. This concerns me. A headache in the morning is a bad sign. Every day we take oxygen saturation readings with our hand-held pulse oximeter. We dutifully record the information and take our vital signs. As expected, our readings drop with altitude—99% at sea level to 83% at base camp. Here at 19,500 ft, my reading is 75%, but just 64% for Remi. Lying in the sleeping bag, my resting heart rate is fast, as one would expect, but slower than Remi's at 110. A hospital patient with Remi's vital signs would be given oxygen.

The OTT group plans to summit tomorrow. Worried by our slow acclimatization, Remi and I are not keen to join them, but radio reports from base camp warn of approaching storms. Also, there hasn't been a single day with favorable south winds, so it's tomorrow or not at all.

Last to come along are the two Italians. They speak little English, we no Italian. We do what we can for international goodwill through mime—pointing, gesturing, and smiling.

Remi and I wish to make an early start, say 3 AM, but the others want to wait—see if the lenticular clouds will break up with the dawn. What the group decides is important. There is safety in numbers, especially when climbing an unknown route buffeted by storms. The loose snow, while just knee deep, is an additional barrier. It's heavy work slogging up a mountain weighed down by five-pound double boots and crampons on each foot, gasping for breath with each step in the thin air. In the end, we compromise, joining the Italians behind the larger guided group. Those in front will break trail, making it easier for us in back. For all these reasons, we agree to start at 7:30 AM. We take our headlamps for a night return. I am not optimistic, but this is our shot—take it or leave it.

The OTT party heads out first, then the two Italians in their red climbing suits. Remi and I bring up the rear in our yellow Himalayan North Face parkas and black bibs. With each of us setting his own pace, we spread out quickly. The older of the two Italians drifts behind me while Remi moves up.

I place my wand at about 20,000 ft. I carefully tamp the loose snow around the base, and hope it will stay put when the wind picks up. Wands are homemade route markers made from thin bamboo tomato stakes. Some are topped with a square "flag" of duct tape. This type is a quickie, jerry-built wand, and the flag can blow off. To see just how fast this can happen, put a duct-tape wand in the freezer. The tape comes unstuck in the cold. I make my wands by the book, slitting one end of the bamboo with a razor, sliding in a long strip of fluorescent orange surveyor's ribbon, tying it to the shaft, and sealing the top inch closed.

As I go, I strategically place several wands and save the rest for higher up. Overhead, the sky is an ominous grey. I see no wands from other climbers. Perhaps they've blown away. More likely, there are none. Our guide friends plant wands sparingly, saving them for higher up. Alas, even then, they use the pitiful duct tape model.

We're doing well. Headaches gone, we are making reasonable time, and it is cold enough to feel good about all the layers we have on—thin, medium, and expedition weight synthetic long underwear, down jacket, down Himalayan expedition parka, two balaclavas, double fleece pants, and triple layer Goretex bibs; synthetic liner socks on the feet covered by thick wool socks, a mountaineering inner boot, outer plastic shell, gaiters, and step-in crampons; for the hands, a three-part system of thin liner glove, thick high altitude insulating mitt, and outer gauntlet shell. At zero F, your everyday 30 mph wind comes with a chill factor of minus 57 degrees F. Of course, gear alone won't get you to the top.

Surprisingly, fully half the guided party turns back early on. I see them standing off to one side, but I don't get the story. The older Italian drops out next. He turns around and makes his way back down alone, leaving me last in line. By now, we have passed Refugio Independencia, a derelict hut at 21,476 feet, and are traversing an open snowfield. No landmarks are visible here to guide a climber on his way down. I purposefully plant a few more wands.

Remi and I are the highest human beings alive in the Western Hemisphere.

We plod higher, eventually crossing the top part of the Gran Acarreo toward the infamous Canaleta. In *Aconcagua: A Climbing Guide*, R. J. Secor describes this as "a 33-degree chute filled with disagreeably loose rocks...to be overcome not by technical skill but rather by mental and physical stamina." We follow the usual route heading up the right side. Normally the harder snow is found here, a surface good for crampons. But this year, the snow is loose. It makes for slow going, and it's getting late. The weather gets worse as I come up to those climbers left of the OTT group. They've turned around before reaching the summit. A few take some of my wands to mark the trail for us on the way down. I keep the rest to mark the route ahead.

I trudge the lower Canaleta, but

not for long. The remaining Italian slogs on with Remi somewhere ahead. The wind has picked up, and in the quickening gusts of swirling snow, visibility drops to mere yards. Alone, gripped by a strange emptiness, unsure of how much further I have to go or where my companions are, I know only that I will still have to find my way down. Above 22,000 ft, Remi, the Italian, and I are the highest human beings alive in the Western Hemisphere. Only the dead Pole is higher.

Survival is everything. The late hour, my waning strength, the weather—everything urges me to play the one card I have left. With the summit just ahead, I turn back, knowing that what I do will put those above at risk. There is no way for me to let Remi know I've turned back, but I have no choice. Remi and the Italian are on their own. But so am I.

Turning around, I look forward to a quick downhill plunge to Berlin. Instead, padded like an Eskimo, I find myself waddling in the soft snow, tripping on my gaiter straps. Suddenly, I'm tumbling down the slope and only manage to stop by digging in my ice ax. Out of nowhere, a storm blows up. Sixty mph winds tear up the slope. Swirling snow cakes my ski goggles with ice. I grope down the mountain, the ice pellets stinging my face like buckshot. Pulling my hood flaps tighter, I stagger forward, blind in the whiteout. For the first time, I think about the dangers. It's not fear in the usual sense I feel, for there is nothing at all I can do. My emotions seem somehow removed, frozen, on hold.

I'm lost—landmarks gone. All is white—up, down, and sideways. Standing still, I impassively weigh the options: stay put until visibility improves or crawl into my Mylar emergency sack. I do nothing. At length, when I can see again, I cautiously descend, guided down by the wands I placed on the way up. I set out more wands to help Remi and the Italian climb down in a whiteout or in the darkness—if they're still alive.

The roaring wind drops as I descend. Above, the mountain is barely visible, cloaked in clouds and ravaged by fierce winds, a full-fledged storm all to itself. I reach Berlin where an OTT guides holds out a cup of hot tea. More thirsty than cold, I gulp cups of cold water first.

Remi and the Italian are somewhere up on the mountain—neither the guide nor I know where. Uncertain what to do, we agree to wait an hour. If they don't arrive by then, we'll go out and search for them.

He hears the dead Pole call his name.

Above, in the upper Canaleta, Remi's hands are freezing. He could put on the three-layer expedition gloves in his backpack but instead stuffs chemical hot packs around his numb fingers. He is hoping I'll catch up so we can summit the final ridge together. While he waits, the Italian staggers up, confusing matters on this Tower of Babel. Remi at first misinterprets the gestures of this new arrival and thinks something bad has happened to me. Eventually he realizes that I've just turned back. Soon thereafter, the Italian also turns around. Remi is left alone. In the growing storm, he harkens to an inner voice. The summit is close—but for now beyond his reach. Remi heaves around to face the downhill battle.

Gravity, fatigue, and afternoon storms explain why most climbing accidents happen on the way down. Remi looks around. All traces of footprints and the route off the Canaleta back to the traverse are long gone.

He stumbles from wand to wand, down through the whiteout in the waning light.

Then something strange happens. Remi is certain he hears the dead Pole call his name and, turning around, sees a wand. His path now clear, he stumbles from wand to wand, down through the whiteout in the waning light. Saved by the wands. For just a few bucks, these simple mountaineering tools are worth their weight in gold.

The story isn't over. As he nears the roofless, dilapidated Independencia hut, a crouched figure in red, the Italian, waves to Remi. Approaching, Remi sees a shivering, scared figure at his wit's end. Partially sheltered and warmly suited against the cold and wind, the Italian might have survived a night to be rescued in the morning. But far better to descend now. Remi hands over a candy bar then short-ropes himself to the trembling man. Together, step by step, following the wands, they de-

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scend. Thus does Father Remi save the Italian's life, if not his soul.

Lying in our tent, I rouse myself, ready to begin the search, and push back the flap. But to my surprise, in the distance I see two figures moving in slow motion across the small rock ledge above. Even with emotions blunted by lack of oxygen, I still feel a listless relief as I watch the two parkas, one yellow, the other red, approach. But even as Remi nears, I'm unable to grasp what's going on and stupidly ask him why he has a rope around his waist with one looped end dragging in the snow. His beard coated with ice, Remi lethargically recounts the rescue. For Remi, it's no big deal. Things alarming and extraordinary only days before are now commonplace. We have all survived. Extremes of pleasure and pain are as nothing compared to the simple gift of life.

Mountain climbing is an addiction.

Our summit bid over, we lie in our bags. Wired and unable to sleep, we talk about what happened that day. But even the euphoria of survival will pale. Soon, little things start to matter. It rankles when snow gets into the tent, irks that the stove needs fixing. It eats at Remi now that, so close to the summit, he didn't make it. For my part, I think he came close enough to meeting a grimmer end. For my part, I am ready to be off while yet dreading the long haul down and the many miles out. "I've had enough of mountains," I announce, the same pronouncement I remember hearing Remi make the year before after climbing Orizaba. Still, I know it will only take a month at the old grind and we'll both be looking forward to the next high peak. Mountain climbing is an addiction, a compulsion that persists even when all the pleasure is gone.

No matter what, I'm getting out.

We sit around the next day, drinking hot tea. All of a sudden, Remi declares he's going back. He'll go solo, if necessary. He'll summit. I think he's crazy. He's assuring me he can survive on the remaining chocolate bars, buy more fuel somewhere, do it alpine style, climb up and get back down in three days—the very madness we both scoffed at just a few days ago. He's now well-acclimatized, he says. Of course, it's remotely possible he might actually pull it off, if he has enough strength left. For me, on the other hand, it's a physical and mental impossibility. No matter what, I'm getting out.

It snows that afternoon. Looking at the falling flakes, Remi comes to his senses, realizing that at least for now, his dream is over. We head down the mountain together.

It is the nature of objectives, and of us who seek them, that one horizon reached should lead to another.

—Joe Tasker

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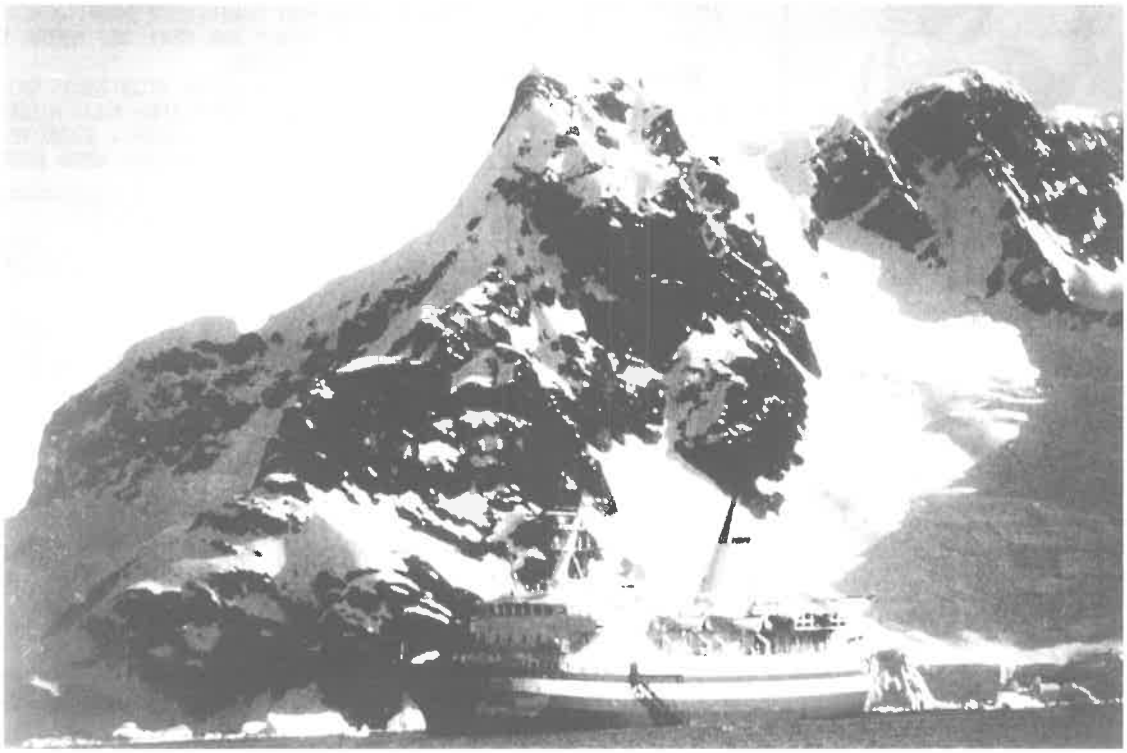
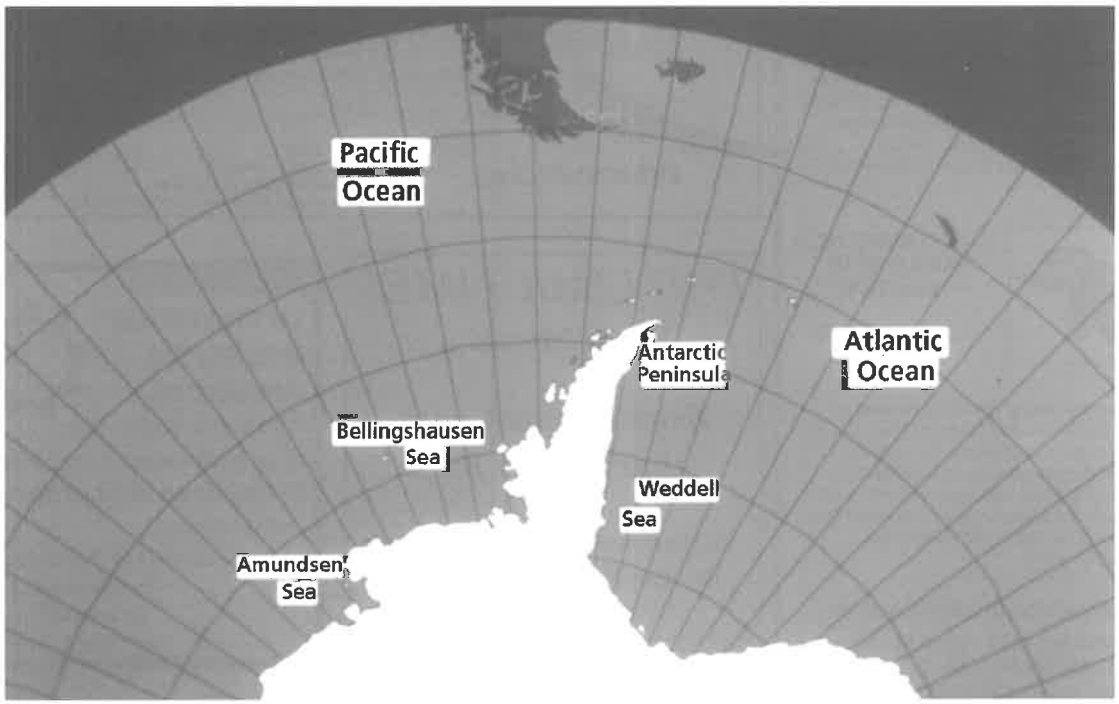


The M.S. Explorer, the worlds first expedition cruise ship measures 73 meters in length, 14 meters in breadth, with a capacity of 100 passengers.



The Drake Passage lies between Cape Horn of South America and the Antarctic Peninsula.

Drake, Rattle and Roll

Surviving the Trip Around Cape Horn

L. Michael Trapasso

In the days of wooden ships and canvas sails, seamen battled the stormy seas around Cape Horn, working to the rhythm of a song. Sea chanties and whaling songs originated this way. During the refrain in a ditty such as "Blood Red Roses," the crew pulled together to hoist the mainsail, weigh the anchor:

Me clothes and shoes are all in pawn
Go down ye blood red roses! Go down!
It's drafty around the Cape of Storms
Go down ye blood red roses! Go down!

You've got your advance, to sea you must go
Go down ye blood red roses! Go down!
To chase them whales through the wind and snow
Go down ye blood red roses! Go down!

Around Cape Horn boys, you must go
Go down ye blood red roses! Go down!
Around Cape Horn through the frost and the snow
Go down ye blood red roses! Go down!

In "Mutiny on the Bounty," a marvelous tale of adventure on the high seas, Captain Bligh angers the crew by insisting upon sailing around the Horn. The crew rebels. They were never told they would have to sail around the Horn, they don't want to risk sailing around Horn, the ship's officers advise against sailing around the Horn. But the Captain is the captain, and they sail around the Horn. The voyage is fraught with misery. Men freeze, suffer, and die.

As a professor of geography and climatology, L. Michael Trapasso has traveled to all 7 continents of the world. Trapasso teaches in the Department of Geography and Geology at Western Kentucky University in Bowling Green, where his research interests include human bioclimatology and environmental perception.

Men freeze, suffer, and die.

What's with going around Cape Horn? The Drake Passage, a short distance of approximately 600 nautical miles, lies between the tip of South America and the Antarctic Peninsula. It looks harmless enough on a globe, taking up a mere square inch or two. The danger lies in its location, an area we climatologists call a subpolar or circumpolar region. In *Moby Dick*, when Captain Ahab delivers his first pep talk to the crew, he vows to hunt the great white whale to the death: "I'll follow him, around the Horn, around the Norway Maelstrom, and around Perdition's Flames before I give him up." Note Captain Ahab refers to three locations. One is hell, the two others are subpolar lows—a sailor's nightmare.

a sailor's nightmare

Climatologically speaking, latitudinal bands of similar climate types circle the earth, running east to west and changing north to south. These bands are the result of large-scale atmospheric circulation. Direct tropical sunlight heats up the atmosphere. Warm air rises and registers as low pressure. As it rises, the air cools, and the water vapor condenses, creating clouds and tropical rain. At the poles (90 degrees North and South Latitude), six months of darkness and six months of weak, slanting sunlight sustain gigantic ice caps, and the white snow and ice reflect much of the sunlight back into space. As air sweeps

across the ice shields, it grows very cold, loses moisture, and becomes dense and heavy. These are katabatic or destiny winds that blow off the ice cap out to the surrounding sea, toward the warm ocean. Destiny winds, with some steering from the jet stream aloft, may evolve into systems known as subpolar or circumpolar lows. Herein lies the beast! Very cold winds from Antarctica create cold fronts that collide with fierce gusts coming from the warmer South Atlantic. The two air masses rotate clockwise, giving rise to some of the worst sea storms imaginable. In the Northern Hemisphere, these monsters lurk off Scandinavia and the Aleutian Archipelago. In the Southern Hemisphere, the fiend lies in wait in the Drake Passage.

the worst sea storms imaginable

Enter Yours Truly, an explorer on sabbatical leave who longs to visit what is described as the coldest, driest, highest, windiest, loneliest, most remote, and least known continent on Earth—Antarctica.

I don't like ships. I'm a landlubber at heart.

The Explorer Shipping Corporation, under contract to Abercrombie and Kent International, assists scientists and educators working in Antarctica. I've negotiated a deal with them to serve as weather expert and lecturer aboard the *M.S. Explorer* in exchange for a very reasonable fare to Antarctica.

Now, I don't like ships. I'm a landlubber at heart. But for what I wanted to do, I had no choice but to take my scopolamine patches and bravely board ship.

We hit the open sea, and all hell breaks loose. "My God...What have I gotten myself into?"

The first six or so hours out of Port of Ushuaia, Argentina, we stay within the Beagle Channel, a stretch of protected water, quiet, calm, and pleasant. This gives me a false sense of security. But then we hit the open sea, and all hell breaks loose. "My God...What have I gotten myself into?" I think. We've entered a subpolar storm.

A lesson on the basics of ship movement. First, there's pitch—the bow goes up and the stern goes down and visa versa. Next, there's yaw—the bow wags from side to side. Finally, there's roll—the starboard side of the ship rocks lower than port, then swings up while the port side goes down. If your bunk happens to be parallel to the hull when this happens, a roll can be quite pleasant and actually rock you to sleep like a baby in a cradle. However, when the ship is rolling and your bunk is at right angles to the hull (as mine is), you feel like you're stretched out on a seesaw. As the ship rolls to starboard, I slide head-first toward the hull. Anxious to protect my head and shoulders, I push away from the hull, only to find myself sliding feet-first toward the foot of the bed as the ship rolls to port. The next roll sends me head-first back toward the hull, back and forth, back and forth...

It is singularly unpleasant when the ship pitches and rolls at the same time. When this happens, it's best to just hit your bunk and stay there while your body moves around in a sort of infinity-sign pattern—the result of pitch and roll, see-saw and wobble. The geometry involved is rather disquieting.

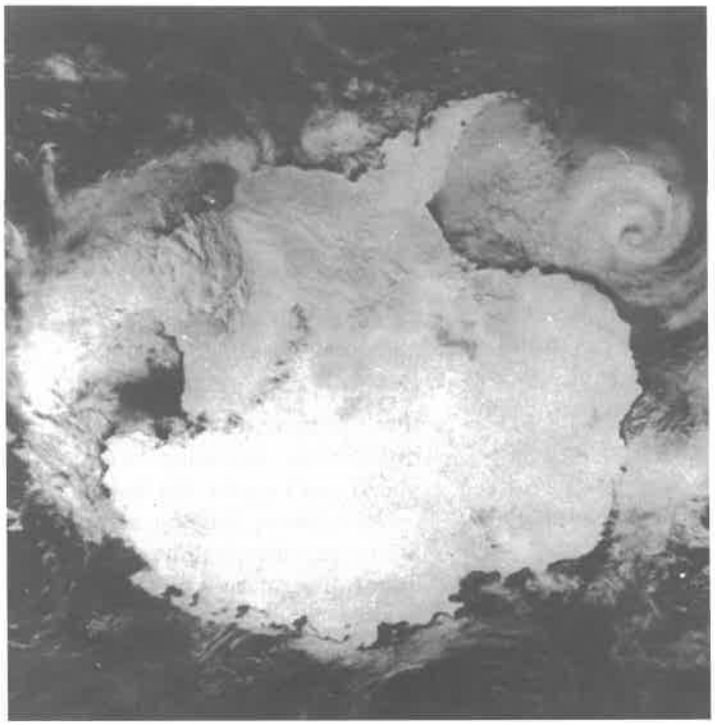
It's funny that I never thought about gravity as a force to contend with on a ship. However, a hard roll to port generates a G-force that actually pins me to the mattress, while a wild roll to starboard temporarily levitates me over the bunk. A rapid change in G's is enough to propel you up a staircase or drag you down into a squat.

A sudden lurch can catapult you over the railing

Getting around the ship is tricky. Until you get your sea legs, you do not move step by step, but grope from hand-hold to hand-hold—a wobbly lunge from door knob to railing to table edge. Early on, we were warned to 1) never linger at the top of a stairwell—a sudden lurch can catapult you over the railing to free-fall down a deck and more, and 2) never hold onto a door frame—doors slam shut when a ship rolls, and "We really want to keep our fingers, don't we?"

that thing that keeps tap, tap, tapping

Unnerving sounds accompany rough seas—noises you come to dread. Doors and dressers bang open, loose objects clatter to the floor. Frustration bloats your spleen when, on hands and knees, you can't locate that thing that keeps tap, tap, tapping. To make matters worse, my cabin is mostly below water level.



Several Subpolar Lows appear as swirling cloud masses around the Atlantic Continent as seen by a Defense Mapping Satellite.

When sights and sounds—when the laws of physics—gang up on you, they undermine your mental health. One moment you might be swearing like a longshoreman, the next piously praying to God with all your heart. And the psychological after-effects of a close encounter with the subpolar lows of the Drake Passage linger. Twice, on consecutive nights, I wake up thinking, "Hmm. I'm swaying just a little...the sea must be fairly calm," only to feel rather stupid when I realize I'm back on land.

An expedition to the Antarctic Peninsula is a fascinating experience, one I recommend to anyone with a spirit of adventure. But beware shipmates! To get there ye must first sail around Cape Horn! Aye, and get through the Drake Passage too, with the beast lying there awaitin' for ye!

The muffled, unholy sound of gurgling water

The muffled, unholy sound of gurgling water swirling around a port hole underwater can drive a passenger less stable than myself over the brink.

Mal de mer is linked to the visual. I find it's okay to look at objects inside the ship. I can even look out to sea from the railing. However, as a rule, you don't want to see what the ship and the sea are doing at the same time. Those who tend to stare out the window at the towering waves are apt to lose the midday meal. My personal bugaboo, the demon that does me in, has to do with the port hole in my cabin. When the ship's upright, daylight floods the room. But as the ship rolls, the light shifts to blue (slightly submerged), then green (really submerged), to black (I'm facing the bottom of the sea!). Then green...blue...and finally back to daylight. Fortunately, there are times when, for safety of the passengers, the crew bolts the steel cover over the port hole. Never am I so happy to see the light of day shut out.

SAEC in cyberspace
http://www.samexplo.org

The Gaucho Poetry of Argentina
http://www.ippi.com/gaucho.html

University of Washington professor George W. Umphrey's site on the cowboy of the pampas—the gaucho. Umphrey includes numerous examples of lyrical poetry written by gauchos who were "unsurpassed in horsemanship, self-reliant, brave to rashness, ready for attack at a moment's notice," including "Y atiendan la relación/Que hace un gaucho perseguido/Que fué buen padre y marido/Empeñoso y diligente/Y sin embargo la gente/Lo tiene por un bandido."

The Wines of Chile
http://www.winesofchile.com

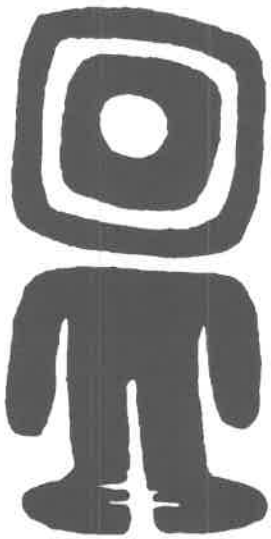
Concha y Toro is just the beginning! Refer to this site for info on touring Chilean wineries, vintage charts, highly recommended wines, and the history of Chilean viniculture. Also, check out their "Chilean Wine Forum" where people post and answer queries on grapes, wine prices, the fermentation process, and aging in oak. This site is also the best place to order such titles as *Chile, A Perfect Trilogy: Climate-Soil-Vine Variety* and *Chile Culture of Wine.*

Puerto Montt to Puerto Natales by Ferry

The popular *M/V Puerto Edén,* a cargo and passenger ferry, takes you on a scenic journey through fjords, coves, and bays between Puerto Montt and Puerto Natales. This site gives you information on departure dates and departure, cabin sizes, prices, and what you'll see. You can book reservations online, too. Of special interest: the photo and video galleries of the virtual tour and the colorful segments on the flora, fauna, and geography of Tierra del Fuego.

Art, Literature & Tango In Argentina
http://www.escapeartist.com/argentina3/art.htm

Like the title says, this site offers a mind-boggling array of information on Argentine art, literature, and the tango. Highlights include: the "Tango Café," dedicated to the Argentine Tango, where you'll find info on where to dance in the U.S. and Canada and comprehensive listings of tango music, books, and videos; analyses of Jorge Luis Borges's work; overviews of galleries that focus on Argentine painting, sculpture, antigues, and modern art.



Guide to Chilean Patagonia
http://www.chileaustral.com/

One of the most comprehensive sites out there on Patagonia's national parks (including Tierra del Fuego and Laguna San Rafael), travel agencies, lodging, arts and literature, cities, and media. Looking for information on the Penguin Colony of Seno Otway, Alberto de Agostini National Park, treks in Balmaceda? Find it here! In Spanish and English.

Chile and Argentina: Cuisine
http://www.goodcooking.com/samerInl.htm

An incredibly detailed site offering articles as "Buenos Aires—Where Steaks are an Artform," "Information on Yerba Mate," and "Chilenos Cocinando á la Chilena." Don't miss the list of scrumptious traditional and gourmet Argentine and Chilean recipies. Includes links to other South American cooking web sites, e.g. Bolivian pepper recipies, banana concoctions of Colombia, and food of the Carib Indians of Coastal Suriname.

Official Home Page of Mt. Aconcagua
http://www.aconcagua.com.ar/

The "official" site, complete with info on climbing conditions, how to get from Mendoza to the mountain, renting equipment, how to hire mules and guides, current weather, where to get food, psychophysical effects of altitude, what to do in Mendoza, environmental

preservation efforts, base camp services, and maps. Includes a gallery of panoramic photos, an Aconcagua chat room, and a form to order climbing permits on-line. In German, English, French, Portuguese and Spanish.

Copiapoa Cacti in the Atacama Desert of Northern Chile

http://www.tarrex.com.au/copiapoa/about.htm

Though geared toward more experienced collectors of cacti, this web site will also appeal to beginning cacti collectors and those who are interested in northern Chile's Atacama Desert. Great information on how to get copiapoa seeds and plant them at home. Includes a lengthy section on everything you need to know about travelling the Atacama Desert, including how to get there by plane, driving tips and hints for the area, areas you shouldn't miss, Antofagasta highlights, and where to find copiapoa populations.

Easter Island

http://www.netaxs.com/~trance/rapanui.html

Easter Island has long been the subject of curiosity and speculation. How and why did its inhabitants carve and transport the massive statues which surround the island? What remains of this culture today, and what lessons can we learn from their legacy? This page is a resource for information on the Internet about Easter Island, also known as "Rapa Nui" and "Isla de Pascua"—over 2,000 miles from the coast of Chile.

Evita Perón

http://www.evitaperon.org/

Developed and maintained by the family of Evita Perón, strives to promote historical, cultural, social and political investigation regarding Evita's accomplishments and revive public interest in modern Argentine history. Find out all about the woman behind the myth—her birth on May 7, 1919 in Los Toldos, her favorite childhood toys, her acting days, her steadfast commitment to Juan Perón—on this site.

Antarctica

http://ice.wizard.net/

Did you know parts of Antarctica are claimed by both Chile and Argentina? More riveting facts on the southernmost continent on this site created by a man who lives in Antarctica. Here you'll find information on recent scientific findings, great photos, employment opportunities in Antarctica, and frequently asked questions about working in Antarctica.

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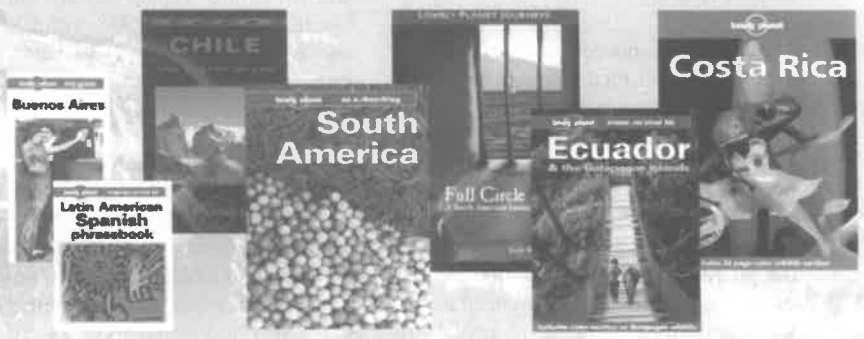

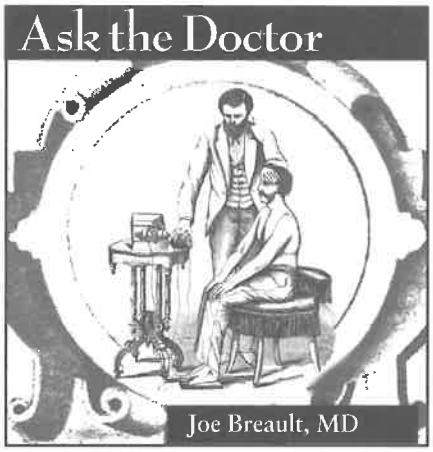

Dr. Joseph Breault graduated from Tulane University School of Medicine with combined MD and MPHTM (Tropical Medicine) degrees. Currently the staff physician at the Ochsner Clinic in New Orleans, he has previously worked at the PHS Indian Hospitals in South Dakota and overseas in the Dominican Republic and Bolivia.

Travel Clinics

Q: I studied in Ecuador last year for a little over 5 months and had constant diarrhea, fever, headache, and a horrible pain on my right side, about an inch above the end of my ribs. After about three days I took Cipro and felt better. Tests for parasites were negative, but when I got back to the U.S., I still felt lousy and tired all the time. My family doctor laughed and said I was just "getting used to" the food in the States again. A month later I had diarrhea and vomiting every few days. Is it possible I may still have some sort of bug from South America a year later? And if so, who would I go to see? None of the doctors I have visited know anything about tropical diseases.

A: Finding a doctor with good experience in tropical medicine can be a challenge, but there are good resources that can assist you. I think you were right to discuss things with your family doctor first, as that will often solve your problems. Your symptoms might be caused by "some sort of bug from South America" the previous year, but if routine medical care hasn't resolved this you need to find an experienced clinician in travel and tropical medicine to help.

One resource is the list of Travel Clinics in the appendix of *The Travel & Tropical Medicine Manual* by Drs. Elaine C. Jong & Russell McMullen. It lists about 50 clinics in the U.S. and another 7 in Canada, all located within medical school academic programs. Another resource is the American Society of Tropical Medicine & Hygiene's Travel Clinic Directory available on the Internet at www.astmh.org/clinics/clinindex.htm. It lists physicians in the U.S. and around the world who offer clinical consultative service in Tropical Medicine, Medical Parasitology, and Travelers' Health.

If these resources don't lead you to an appropriate doctor, consult a specialist in infectious diseases in your area.

Microencapsulated DEET

Q: I am a tour operator specializing in South America, and I spend a good amount of time visiting jungle areas. My problem is that I almost always get insect bites no matter what precautions I take. Some years ago I used an insect repellent by 3M called Ultrathon and never had a bite while using it. Now I can't seem to find it anywhere. What do you know about Ultrathon?

A: Good news! It's still available, but not in the normal retail market. Ultrathon is a microencapsulated formula that releases DEET slowly over time. Some consider it the best thing on the market for repelling mosquitoes. For more information, see www.mmm.com/intl/CA/english/market/mec/about.html.

A fine review of insect repellents was recently published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* ("Fradin MS. Mosquitoes and Mosquito Repellents: A Clinician's Guide." *AIM* 1 June 1998. 128:931-940) and is available for you to read on the internet at www.asim.org/journals/annals/01jun98/mosquito.htm. The author writes:

Until 1989, the standard-issue insect repellent of the U.S. military consisted of 75% DEET in an alcohol base. Complaints about the aesthetic feel of this product and concerns about potential toxicity under long-term daily use led to U.S. Army-sponsored studies to produce new formulas. The 3M Company (St. Paul, Minnesota) developed a slow-release, polymer-based product containing 35% DEET; this has become the repellent provided to all U.S. military personnel. This product is available to the general public exclusively through the Amway Corporation (New York, New York) under the brand name HourGuard. If lower-levels of extended-release DEET are desired, Minnetonka Brands (Eden Prairie, Minnesota) offers products containing 6.5% and 10% DEET [Skedaddle].

If you want to get your hands on Ultrathon itself you can still get it from Travel Medicine, Inc. by calling 1-800-TRAVMED or ordering it at **www.travmed.com/insect2.html.**

You should not use more than a 10% DEET product on children. Is the slow-release DEET at 35% just as safe as a regular 10% DEET product? This is yet to be proven, so best err on the side of caution. Use a lower concentration for children, especially if you will be applying it often and for many days.

I might add that DEET is not as scary as sometimes portrayed. A recent article in the August, 1998 issue of the *American Journal of Tropical Medicine & Hygiene* (Goodyear L, Behrens RH. "Short Report: The Safety and Toxicity of Insect Repellents," *AJTMH* 1998. 59(2):323-324) notes that plant-based repellents can also be dangerous: "Citronella, one of the most popular ingredients in natural repellents, caused the death of a 21-month-old child after ingestion of 15 ml of the oil. Eucalyptus oil has an LD50 within the same range as DEET; oral ingestion has resulted in two deaths and several reports of poisonings. Unlike DEET, limited experience with natural oils used as insect repellents means their true safety profile has yet to be determined." DEET has been used by many tens of millions of people and although serious side effects have occurred, these have been rare and mostly in children. I consider DEET a safe drug when properly used and recommend using a 33% slow release product rather than a higher concentration.

You can e-mail medical questions to Dr. Breault at **joebreault@worldnet.att.net** Although the questions cannot be answered personally, a selection of questions will be answered and published in future issues of the South American Explorer.

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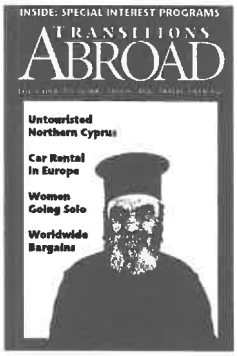

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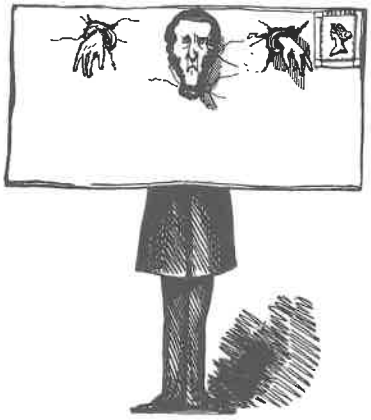

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Index to Advertisers

HOTELS, LODGING

Cafe Cultura 39
Cusco Amazonico 25
Explorers' Inn 25
Hostal Eva Luna 40
Hostal Iquique 25
Hostal Loreto 37
La Castellana 37
Machu Picchu Pueblo Hotel 25
Magical Journey Willka-Tika 25
Mochilero's Backpackers 51
Orange Guest House 59
Yachana Lodge 38

LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION

"Amazonas" Spanish School 33
Academia Latinoamerica de Español 39
Bipo & Toni's Academia de Español 38
British Consul 39
Escuela de Español "Simon Bolivar" 40
Excel Language Center 33
"La Lengua" Spanish School 40
New World Teachers 59
"Pichincha" Spanish School 38
South American Spanish Institute 59

PUBLICATIONS, MAPS, VIDEOS

Abya Yala News 59
Bolivian Times 33
Bradt Publications 6
Cultural Survival Quarterly 20
Driving Through Latin America 59
Lima Herald 23
Lima Times 25
Lonely Planet 31
Rapa Nui Journal 34
Transitions Abroad 34

TOUR OPERATORS IN THE U.S.

Amazon Adventurers 33
Southwind Adventures 6
Tambo Tours 35

TOUR OPERATORS IN SOUTH AMERICA

Angermeyer's Enchanted Expeditions 38
Inca Explorers 34
Manu Expeditions 25
Manu Nature Tours 37
Mayuc Cusco 25
Native Life 48
Safari Ecuador 34

OTHER SERVICES

Adopt a Manatee 24
Mama Africa 25
Manu Cafe 37
Odyssey Travel 11
SAETA 21
Star Net Cafe 58
Ultraviolet 25
Yacu Amu Rafting 51

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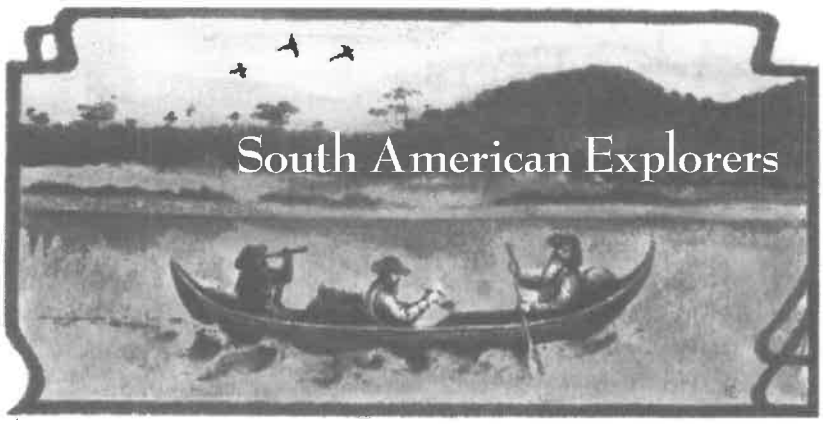

by Daniel Buck

Alphons Stübel and Wilhelm Reiss

In 1868, two German geologists specializing in volcanology picked Hawaii to study volcanoes. Inspired by Alexander von Humboldt's scientific travels in the northern Andes several decades earlier, however, the pair—Alphons Moritz Stübel (1835-1904) and Wilhelm Reiss (1838-1908)—decided to visit Colombia first. They landed at Santa Marta on January 27, 1868, a detour that turned into a decade-long expedition and carried them through Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru, and down the Amazon to Brazil. An exhausted Reiss went back to Germany in early 1876, while Stübel continued solo through Uruguay, Argentina, Bolivia, and Chile, and returned home via the United States in 1877. They never set foot in Hawaii.

Stübel and Reiss are little-known today in the English-speaking world. Neither wrote a comprehensive, narrative account of his expedition (they both opposed the publication of their voluminous travel letters, on the ground that the informal nature of the correspondence would detract from their reputations as scientists), and little of what they did publish has been translated from the original German. Furthermore, after their return, they had a bitter falling out over volcanological theories and stopped speaking to one another.

Their collections, broken up and scattered amongst several German museums and universities, were long ignored or thought to have been destroyed by the bombing during World War II. Only in the past decade have the collections resurfaced and been displayed in museums in Germany and, most recently, in Colombia. Michaela Stüttgen, an authority on the Stübel-Reiss expedition, said that they "traveled to South America as volcanologists and abandoned the continent as archaeologists, ethnologists, geographers, and passionate collectors of photography." They also became seasoned travelers, enduring Andean snowstorms, an earthquake in Ecuador, a revolution in Colombia, and jail in Bolivia where they were held on suspicion of being highwaymen.

During the decade-long journey, Stübel and Reiss collected geological, zoological, and botanical specimens as well as textiles, ceramics, and other artifacts. They also bought photographs and commissioned paintings and watercolors. (Stübel himself was an excellent illustrator, and they hired artists during the trip.) But their plan to open an anthropological museum in Germany never materialized.

Stübel and Reiss's made major contributions to Andean archaeology. Their dig at Ancon, on the Peruvian coast near Lima resulted in their three-volume work, Das Todtenfeld von Ancón in Perú (1880-87). Stübel's studies at Tiwanaku led to Die Ruinestätte von Tiahuanaco im Hochlande des alten Perú (1892) written in collaboration with Max Uhle.

The resurgence of interest today in the Stübel-Reiss expedition has to do with the photographs they collected as an afterthought. In the 1860s, photography was just coming into vogue with scientific expeditions, but Stübel and Reiss didn't want to lug along cumbersome wet-plate equipment. Moreover, Stübel had reservations about photography as an art form and a tool of science. He

Alphons Stübel (1835-1904)

Alphons Stübel (1835-1904)

thought the camera hampered individualization, that it was slavishly ruled by the unyielding laws of optics and hobbled by an unrelenting demand for light. In the end, they decided to purchase photographs to help artists recall later on details of scenes they didn't have time to paint.

Stübel and Reiss purchased their photographs from some of the leading photographers of the era—the Helsby brothers, Ricardo Villalba, the Courret brothers, Georges von Grumbkow, and Arturo Terry. All in all, they acquired more than 2,000 images during the trip, and Reiss another 800. Today, these images constitute one of the largest and richest collections of 19th-century South American photography in the world.

The Stübel-Reiss expedition and their stunning photographs have been featured in exhibitions in 1988 in Berlin (Collection Alphons Stübel, by Andreas Krase); in 1994 in Munster (Spurensuche. Zwei Erdwissenschaftler im Südamerika des 19.Jahrhunderts, by Andreas Brockman and Michaela Stüttgen); and in 1996 in Bogotá (Tras las huellas: Dos viajeros alemanes en tierras latinoamericanas, edited by Michaela Stüttgen). ◙

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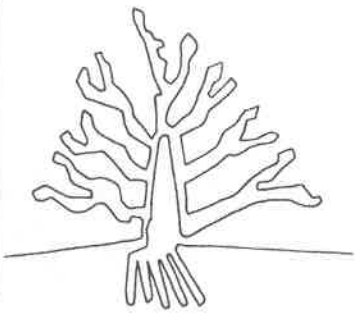

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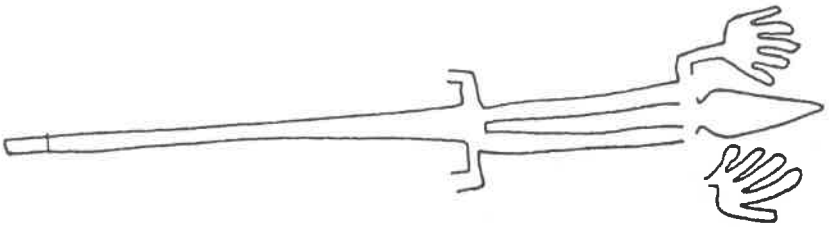

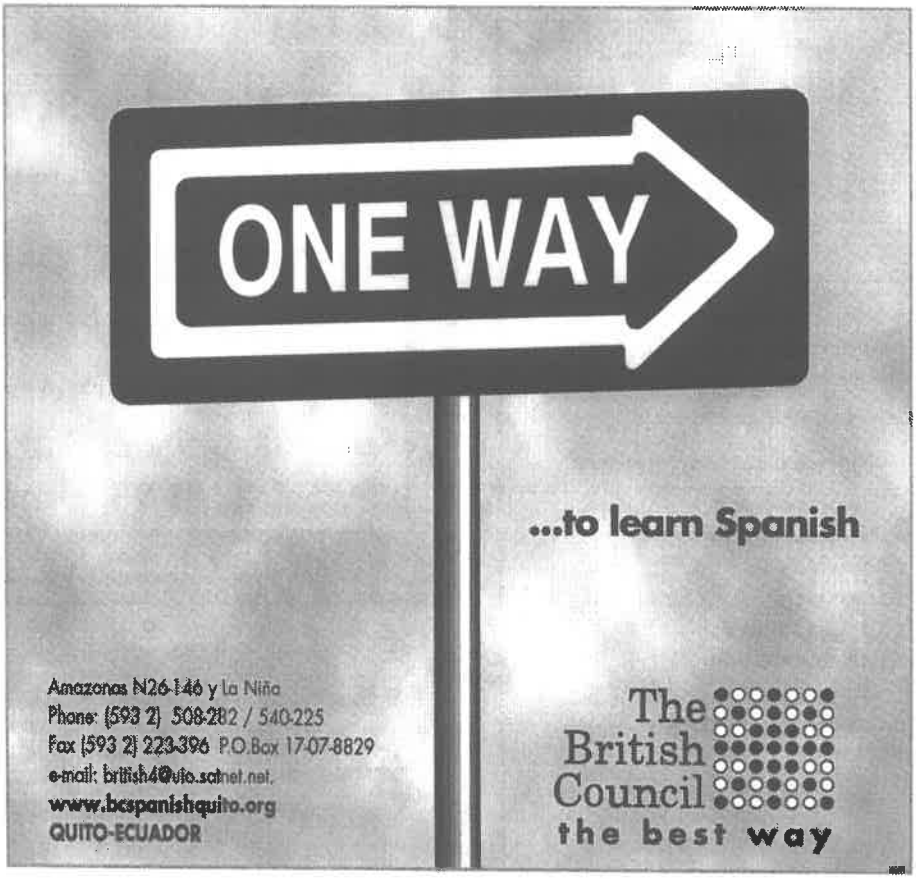

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All classifieds currently running will expire with Issue number that appears at the end of the ad, e.g. (54).

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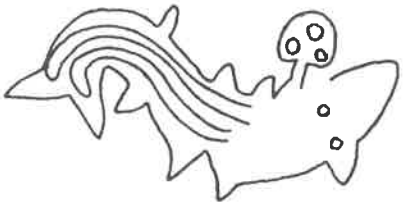

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Issue 53, Autumn 1998
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Amazon: A Shaman's Apprentice: Mark Plotkin Interview
Peru: Losing Your House in the Jungle, Boca Manu
Paraguay: Road Adventure
Peru: El Niño and The Fall of Empires

Issue 52, Summer 1998
Ecuador: La Capitana, Treasure Galleon
Andes: Andean Thievery
Brazil: Dune Buggying in Natal, Brazil
Peru: Economic Boom in Red Dye, Chilca
Argentina: Motorcycle South
Ecuador: Revelations in Vilcabamba

Issue 51, Spring 1998
Peru: Hunting Medicines of the Machiguenga
Ecuador: The Last Days of Moritz Thomsen
Guyana: Bushwhacked on the Guyana Trail
So. Am: The Ups and Downs of Courier Travel
Uruguay: Classic Cars of Montevideo
Peru: Inca Choqek'iraw Revealed

Issue 50, Winter 1997
20th Anniversary Issue
Bolivia: Vintage Postcards
Peru: Mummy of Wariwilka
Guatemala: Semana Santa Festival
Amazon: Epic River Adventure, Revisited
Venezuela: Gran Sabana Vignettes

Issue 49, Autumn 1997
Belize: Jungle Expedition
Peru: Puya raimondii, Giant Plant
Argentina: Evita Perón, Argentine Obsession
Ecuador: Undersea Treasure
Ecuador: Ferrocarriles Ecuatorianos Railroad

Issue 48, Summer 1997
Florida: Sunken Peruvian Treasure
Bolivia: Solar Ovens
Ecuador: Love Story
Brazil: Salvador de Bahia Excursion
Peru: Covering Hostage Crisis

Issue 47, Spring 1997
Peru: Shawl Designs
Guatemala: Pacaya Volcano
Brazil: Neblina, Highest Peak
So. Am.: Photography How-To's
Chile: Kayaking Rio Gallegos

Issue 46, Winter 1996
Peru: Hydrology of Machu Picchu
So.Am: History of S.A. Plane Crashes
Brazil: Tracking in the Pantanal
Colombia: Motorcycling in Colombia

Issue 45, Autumn 1996
Suriname: Giant Leeches
Bolivia: Knitting Cooperative
Peru: Surfing Guide
Nicaragua: William Walker, Part II

Issue 44, Summer 1996
Nicaragua: William Walker, Part I
Ecuador: The Herb Doctor—Ecuadorian Curandero
Brazil: Belem's Market
Ecuador: Galápagos Scuba Diving
Cuba: Cuba Now and Then
Peru: Arpilleras

Issue 43, Spring 1996
Peru/Brazil: Commander Dyott and Colonel Fawcett
Ecuador: Commander Dyott Remembered
Peru: Sipan Archaeology Conference
Argentina: Kayaking Rio Cotahuasi Canyon
Peru: Orphanage in Piura
Chile/Arg.: Patagonia by Truck

Issue 42, Winter 1995
Peru: Making *Sabotaje en la Selva*
Guyana: Jungle Explorations
Colombia: Archaeology of San Agustin
Ecuador: Leishmaniasis
Ecuador: US & Ec. School Partnership
So. Am.: Festivals in South America

Issue 41, August 1995
Peru: Stones and Ancient Peoples
Bolivia: Village Adventure
Paraguay: Viewing the Eclipse
Chile: Climbing Mt. Pissis
Galápagos: Uninhabited Isla Santiago
Bolivia: Exploits of Butch Cassidy & Sundance Kid
Argentina: Hitchhiking in Patagonia

Issue 40, May 1995
So. Am.: Ozone and Ultraviolet: Is S.A. at Risk?
Panama: Motorcycling the Darién.
South/ Central: Epiphytes—Plants up a Tree
Venezuela: Angel Falls Discovery
Venezuela: The Angel Brothers' Adventures
So. Atlantic: Deception Island—Antarctic Peninsula Region
Venezuela: The Yanomamö
Ecuador: A Volunteer in the Rainforest

Issue 39, December 1994
Peru: The Re-Rediscovery of VIRA VIRA
Peru: The Ruins of VIRA VIRA
Peru: VIRA VIRA in Andean Context
Ecuador: Fishermen of Sua
Chile: Ghosttowns of Northern Chile

Issue 38, September 1994
Venezuela: A Geological Field Expedition in the Andes
Peru: The Clay Lick of Manu
Brazil: Preserving the Pantanal
Bolivia: Travelling in Bolivia
Peru: Kayaking the Colca Canyon
Argentina: Gran Bajo de San Julian

Issue 37, June 1994
Argentina: Wild-West Shows & Rodeos in the Early 1900's
Brazil: Candomblé Rituals of Salvador de Bahia
Brazil: Rainforest Destruction in Rondonia
South Am.: How to Visit Sm. Islands w/o Destroying Them
Peru/Bolivia: Rocks and their Meaning in Andean Mythology

Issue 36, March 1994
Guyana: Botany Expedition
Equipment: Global Positioning Systems
S.America: Venomous Snakes
Falkland Isles: Stanley

Issue 35, November 1993
Suriname: Genealogy
Chile: Punta Arenas
Colombia: Dance Festival
Peru: Archaeology
Guatemala: Pacaya Volcano

Issue 34, June 1993
Ecuador: Train Ride
S. America: Languages
Venezuela: Cerro Kukenan
Peru: Ancient Water System
Peru: Television Assignment
Brazil: Ludwig Update

Issue 33, April 1993
Ecuador: Bullfighting
Brazil: Ludwig, Part II
Peru: Biking Story
Peru: Pusharo Petroglyohs

Issue 32*, January 1993
Brazil: Ludwig, Part I
Peru: Rafting the Napo, Part II
Peru: Machu Picchu Discoveries
Venezuela: Araya Peninsula
Brazil: Amazon

Issue 31, May 1992
Peru: Climbing Huascaran
Ecuador: Rafting the Napo, Part I
Chile: Mysteries of Easter Island
Peru: Barchans of La Joya

Issue 30, November 1991
Chile: Condor Study
Bolivia: Cholera Scam
Colombia: Precolumbian Pottery
Peru: Interview Vince Lee
Peru: Travel By Burro
Colombia: Lost City of the Tairona

Issue 29, May 1991
S. America: Source of Amazon
Peru: Robert Randall Tribute
Peru: Lost City Ramblers
Venezuela: Entomological Study II

Issue 28, February 1991
Venezuela: Entomological Study I
Brazil: Han Staden, Part III
Peru: Adoption
Peru: Travel by Bus
S. America: Bicycle Trip

Issue 27, November 1990

Peru: Padre Ortiz Mission
Costa Rica: Quakers in Monteverde
Brazil: Hans Staden, Part II
Paraguay: Richard Burton, War Correspondent
Chile: Paso Leon Trek

Issue 26, August 1990

Brazil: Hans Staden, Part I
Peru: 1941 Journey Down Huallaga
S. America: Heights of S.A. Mountains
S. America: Aguirre Controversy
Costa Rica: Bushmasters

Issue 25, May 1990

Peru: Prospecting for Gold
Venezuela: Climbing Auyantepui
Chile: Lake District Hike
Panama: Pearl Islands
Brazil: Tamarins
Peru: "Social Climbers" on Huascarán

Issue 24, January 1990

S. America: Courteville Expedition
Galápagos: Marine Iguanas
Antarctica: Kayaking
Peru: Earthwatch Project
Equipment: Compass for S.A.
Peru: Interview Barry Walker

Issue 23, November 1989

Ven./Brazil: Humboldt on the Casiquiare
Ven/Brazil: Casiquiare Mystery
S. America: S. America Cannibalism
S. America: History of Beer
Peru: Climbing in the Huayhuash
Chile: Boat Through the Fjords

Issue 22, August 1989

Peru: Puncuyoc, Inca Ruin
Ecuador: Bicycling
French Guyana: Adventure Story
Chile: Easter Island
Bolivia: Climbing Cololo

Issue 21, May 1989

Brazil: Amazon Tidal Bore
Amazon: Candiru Fish
Amazon: Trans-Amazon Road Rally
Peru: Tambopata Nature Reserve
Peru: Childhood in Peru, 1900's

Issue 20, January 1989

Chile/Arg.: Skiing
Argentina: Penguins of the Valdez
Peru: Hiking Nevado San Juan
S.America: Interview John Brooks, Editor S.A. Handbook
Bolivia: Miners of Potosi
S.America: Notable Toilets

Issue 19, October 1988

Panama/Col: Walking the Darién
Galápagos: Non-Native Threats
Brazil: Portuguese Tapes
Peru: Looking for Paititi
Brazil: The Pantanal
S.America: Finding Work

Issue 18, August 1988

S.America: Aguirre, Wrath of God
S.America: Quinoa, the Mother Grain
Peru: Santa Catalina Convent
Bolivia: Bolivian Solars
Chile: Hiking Isla Navarino

Issue 17, May 1988

Peru: Interview Charles Munn, Macaw Expert
Suriname: 17th Century Scientist, Maria Sibylla Merian
Ecuador: Andean Experience
Peru: In Search of Caves
Peru: Taquile Island
S.America: Biking Alaska to Tierra del Fuego, Part II

Issue 16, February 1988

S.America: Biking Alaska to Tierra del Fuego, Part I
Ecuador: Ashuar Architecture
Peru: Kayaking Paucartambo, Part II
Bolivia: Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid
S.America: Interview with Loren McIntyre
Panama: Hiking El Baru

Issue 15, October 1987

Peru: Kayaking Paucartambo, Part I
S.America: Voyages of Columbus
Bolivia: Amboro National Park
Peru: SAEC Club History
Argentina: Mountain Passes Through the Andes

Issue 14, July 1987

Galápagos: Island Plant Life
Venezuela: History of Roraima
Bolivia: Gold Fields of Tipuani
S. America: Tame Birds as Cultural Tracers

Issue 13, July 1986

Venezuela: The Yanomamö
Chile: Kayaking the West Coast
Peru: Gran Pajaten Controversy
Argentina: Lost El Meson Meteorite
Peru: Caving

Issue 12, September 1985

Venezuela: Kayaking the Amazon
Chile/Arg: Beagle Channel Dispute
Peru: Vilcabamba Revisited
Peru: Condor Study
Peru: Gran Vilaya
Venezuela: German Conquistadors
S.America: Foundation of International Community Assistance (FINCA)

Issue 11, August 1984

Venezuela: Jimmie Angel's Lost City
S.America: Poison Dart Frogs
Ecuador: Indigenous Architecture
Chile/Arg: Beagle Channel Dispute I
Peru: Earthquake Prediction

Issue 10, June 1983

S.America: Andean Music
Peru: Solar Energy
Venezuela: Oilbirds
Bolivia: Takesi Trail
Chile: Huemul, Chile's Deer

Issue 9, January 1983

C.America: Kayaking
Colombia: Lost City of the Tairona
Brazil: Agassiz Expedition
Peru: Nazca Lines
Amazon Basin: Titi Monkeys
Peru: Aguaruna Folktale

Issue 8, August 1981

S.America: Pigafetta, First Tourist
Colombia: Lake Guatavita
S.America: S.A. National Parks
Peru: Huari Archaeology
Colombia/Ven: Search for S.A. Pygmies
Brazil/Arg: Itaipu Dam
Bolivia: Laguna Colorada
S.America: Mapping South America

Issue 7, December 1980

Panama/Col: Driving the Darién
Peru: Andean Dyes
Peru: Inca Trail Clean Up
S.America: History of S.A. Handbook
Ecuador: Searching for Treasure
Ecuador: The Curaray by Dugout, Part II
S.America: Explorer Aleixo Garcia

Issue 6*, May 1980

Ecuador: Monkeys
Ecuador: The Curaray by Dugout, Part I
S.America: The Golden Age of Guano
Chile/Arg: Patagonia
Andes: Travel with Pack Animals
S.America: The Botfly

Issue 5*, December 1979

Peru: Trek to Chavin
Peru: Colca Canyon
Colombia: Bari Indians
Ecuador: Cayapas Survey Expedition
S.America: Double Amputee Mountain Climber
S.America: Ancient Stone Inscriptions

Issue 4, April 1979

Andes: Enigmatic Whistling Huacos
Amazon: Ethnobotany with Nicole Maxwell
S.America: S.A. Bird Books
Amazon: Building a Balsa Raft
Amazon: Journey of Orellana
Peru: Dots of Pantiacolla

Issue 3*, August 1978

Venezuela: Maria Lionza Voodoo Cult
Bolivia: Underwater Treasure Hunting
S.America: Caving
Peru: Potato Hairs, Nature's Pest Control
History: Life with the Aguarunas
Uruguay: Mysterious Death Tide
S.America: Jeep Across the Amazon

Issue 2, March 1978

S.America: Jeep Across the Amazon
Chile: Seagoing Mountaineers, Part II
S.America: Bird Speciation
Argentina: Jewish Gauchos
Andes: Royal Inca Highway
Peru: First Descent of the Marañon
Peru: Dots of Pantiacolla

Issue 1, October 1977

Peru: The "Extinct" Yellow-Tailed Woolly Monkey
Amazon: Jeep across the Amazon, Part 1
Peru: Dots of Pantiacolla
Peru: Rafting the Urubamba
Chile: Juan Fernandez Islands
Chile: Sea-going Mountaineers, Part I
Antartica: The Story of Krill

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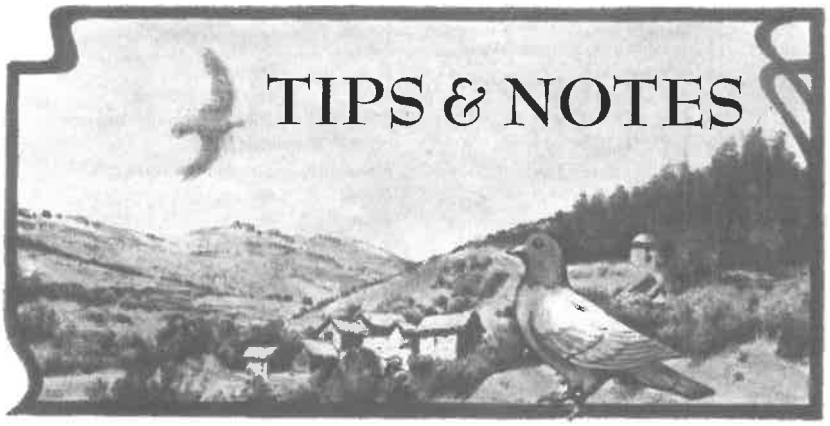

Congress of Culture

Ayacucho's Universidad Nacional de San Cristobal de Huamanga will sponsor the 1998 Congress of Andean Humanities and Culture in November. The Social Sciences department is looking for donations to help fund the six-day international conference, which has been held in various locations in Peru every two years since 1974.

The conference will offer symposiums on Anthropology, Archaeology, Ethnography, Folklore, Communications Media, and Linguistics as well as other disciplines. If you would like to make a donation or would like more information about the conference contact Professor Walter Aguilar Silva, Decano de la Facultad de Ciencias Sociales, Tel/Fax No. (011) (51-64) 912-510, Address: Jr. Garcilaso de la Vega No. 175—Tercer Piso, Ayacucho, Peru.

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John Muir Publications is looking for authors to write eco-travel guides for Ecuador, Peru, and Argentina and relocation/retirement guides for Belize, Costa Rica, Argentina, Panama, and Ecuador. A typical advance for these guides is $3,500 to $4,000, but varies with author's experience. For full particulars write Cassandra Conyers, Acquisitions Editor, John Muir Publications, PO Box 613, Santa Fe, NM 87504. Fax: 505-988-1680. E-mail: cassandra@muir.com

Seeing Dots

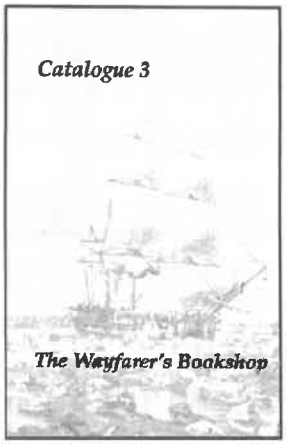
What happened to the "dots" of Pantiacolla, the lead article in Issue 1 (October 1977) of the *South American Explorer?* An article on the dots appeared again in Issue 2, and an explanation of their origin based on low-level flights over the dots was published in Issue 4 (April 1979).

If further evidence were needed as to the true nature of the "pyramids" of Pantiacolla, this has been provided by SAEC member/advisor Gregory Deyermenjian. In August 1996, he and his party of Peruvian expeditionaries—Paulino Mamani, Ignacio Mamani, Dante Núñez del Prado, and Fernando Neuenschwander—reached the site, called "Parotoari" by the Machiguenga Indians, on foot. They spent a number of days walking over, photographing, and filming the formations. Their experience leaves them without doubt that the dots are of natural origin.

For those interested in further information about the dots and the 1996 expedition, contact Gregory Deyermenjian at 179 Common Street, Watertown, MA 02172.

Lima to Huancayo Train

The Lima to Huancayo train has reopened with limited service. The first round trip was made over the Fiestas Patrias national holiday, July 28 and 29, after some six or seven years of inactivity. Service is currently limited to departures from Lima on the last Saturday of every month, returning from Huancayo the following Monday. Talk continues of future bi-weekly departures.



Wayfarer's Bookshop

If you're an avid collector of rare manuscripts on Latin America and can't find what you're looking for in our hard-to-beat (if we do say so ourselves) South American Explorers Club catalog, get in touch with The Wayfarer's Bookshop for a catalog chock-full of unique finds including:

Through the Heart of Patagonia by H. Hesketh Prichard, 1902 first edition. "Extremities slightly rubbed, otherwise good copy" for CDN$345.

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Feathered III Serpent Sinks

American explorer Gene Savoy, whose wooden ship *Feathered Serpent III* broke apart and sank in the Pacific Ocean, says that this will not interrupt his around-the-world expedition.

Captain Savoy and a crew of six were rescued August 20,1998 five-hundred miles southeast of Christmas Island by the cargo ship *Ever Victory*. Savoy and his men had been floating in life rafts at sea for over twenty-four hours.

The Grand Ophir Sea Expedition was on the second leg of a seven-year voyage. The seventy-three foot vessel, made entirely of Peruvian mahogany, went down only fourteen days after leaving Hawaii en route to Brisbane, Australia. The crew of the *Feathered Serpent III* included five Americans and two Japanese.

In a conversation with his family, Captain Savoy described the mishap when his ship encountered slamming waves. One of the cross beams connecting the two dragon-headed hulls "popped" as forceful breakers hit the ship off the port beam. Under pummeling by the breakers, the weakened ship cracked and another cross-beam detached. Before it sank, the two hulls were briefly held together by netting.

Unable to salvage valuable gear and documents, crewmen watched as the *Feathered Serpent III* wrenched apart and sank. Captain Savoy told his family, "I even lost my wristwatch. It's tragic to watch your ship go down, but everyone survived. We were lucky. The crew was calm and disciplined. All are in good spirits. We kept our sense of humor as we drifted along in the life raft. It was a happy ship."

This is not the first time Gene Savoy has had to abandon ship. In 1969, caught off the coast of Colombia, the doubled-hulled totora reed raft, *Feathered Serpent I*, encountered heavy storms. The ship, however, was recovered and completed its voyage to Panama.

"This incident won't stop us," said Savoy, founder of the Reno-based non-profit Andean Explorers Foundation and Ocean Sailing Club. For further information on Gene Savoy, the Grand Ophir Sea Expedition, and ways to help, see the expedition's web site at www.aefosc.org.

Feathered III Serpent

La Hospederia Don Bosco La Tola: Los Niños Migrantes

by Diana Morris, Quito Clubhouse business manager explorer@saec.org.ec

La Hospederia Don Bosco La Tola, founded in Quito, Ecuador by the Salesians twenty years ago, provides shelter for over 400 homeless indigenous people. For a nominal fee, people receive a place to sleep and a simple meal.

La Tola runs a "Los Niños Migrantes" program for orphaned and abused boys between the ages of 5 and 17. To make money, these boys shine shoes during the day and return to La Tola at night for dinner and an hour of classes.

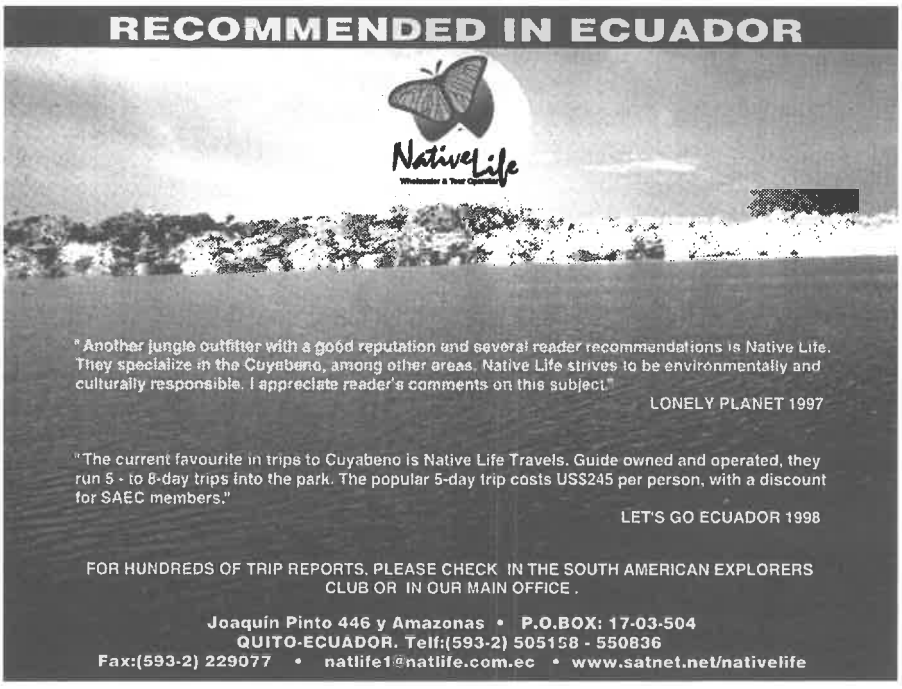
Although the boys' day-to-day needs of food and clothing are met, their future welfare remains uncertain. My vision is to provide these boys with vocational instruction, encouragement, self-confidence, and love. To this end, the SAEC Quito Clubhouse collects donations and organizes volunteers to participate in nightly activities and monthly outings. With donations from companies like Western Oilfield Environmental Services and Canada and numerous private donations, we bought La Tola much-needed supplies and sponsored a summer camp at the beach for these boys. Imagine twenty-six excited boys seeing the ocean for the first time, playing games, swimming, and returning to Quito a little sunburned but smiling from ear to ear.

What can you do to help?

- Give personal or company-financed donations to fund school programs, building improvements, and self-generating income projects.
- Donate supplies, especially food, medicine, clothing, tools, paper, shoe polish, and thread.
- Volunteer on one of the many La Tola service projects.
- Offer to teach your professional or trade skills.

Help us make a difference!

ecuador information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"Another jungle outfitter with a good reputation and several reader recommendations is Native Life. They specialize in the Cuyabeno, among other areas. Native Life strives to be environmentally and culturally responsible. I appreciate reader's comments on this subject."
LONELY PLANET 1997
"The current favourite in trips to Cuyabeno is Native Life Travels. Guide owned and operated, they run 5 - to 8-day trips into the park. The popular 5-day trip costs US$245 per person, with a discount for SAEC members."
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Ithaca Club

There once was an Irish lass
In July her wedding did pass.
'Twas an outdoor affair
Truly extraordinaire
The day Saoirse and Larry held "mass."

The weather was sunny and bright
Saoirse wore linen so white.
Larry sported a vest
He looked simply his best
As the day unfolded just right.

How did this great couple meet?
Just listen, hold on to your seat:
From wash, rinse, to spin
Love in a laundry bin
Where Larry saw Saoirse's big feet.

The bride's dad gave the toast of the night:
"'Big Love' have this couple so right."
Larry asked him for her hand.
Via e-mail he planned—
A note of romantic byte.

The fun spilled o'er the dance floor.
Saoirse's belly dance made Larry adore.
His bride shimmied and shook
As we all took a look
And then cheered and then chanted for more.

From the start to the end of the day
Their smiles told the tale in a way
That no one could doubt
What this couple's about
In true love they will hopelessly stay.

—Jay Williamson

Congratulations and love to Ithaca Club office manager Saoirse McClory and Lawrence Hirschberger!

Quito Club

In and around Ecuador: The border dispute between Ecuador and Peru continues...The elections in Colombia are over, but travel advisories are still in effect...El Niño has passed and the Humboldt current returned to normal temperatures...A 7.3 earthquake in Equador left many homeless.

Young British student members from World Challenge used the Club extensively while they organized volunteer opportunities and time to hike, climb and explore. They left much-needed supplies for La Tola, trip reports, and great stories. A collective thank you to them and all the other members who helped the Club this summer! Also a fond farewell to volunteers Damaris Carlisle and Sean Delahunty. We'll miss you both!

A noisy day at the Quito Club on Sunday, July 12, 1998: military helicopters roared above us to hail Jamil Mahuad as the new President of Ecuador as cheering parades from the French Embassy down the road celebrated France as World Cup champions.

Continued on next page

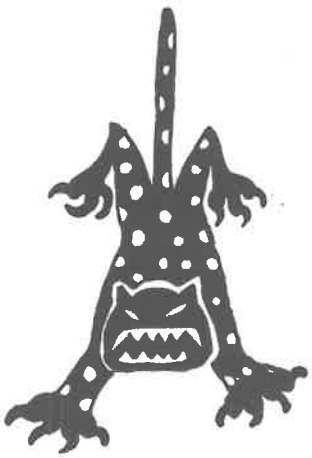
We now have a pay phone in the Club for your convinience. Buy a nifty phone card and the world is at your fingertips!

Wednesday night presentations continue with such eclectic topics as the cuisine of Ecuador, Pre-Colombian art, and the adventures of a man who has been bike riding around the world for over four years. These presentations, along with his with Saturday outings and you will be sure to find things to do during your stay.

This summer, Diana organized a four-day summer camp at Acantilado in Esmeraldas for 26 kids from La Tola who had never seen the ocean before. A great trip for all! Thank you to the members who donated to the fund to send the kids to camp. Keep in mind that we work with La Tola daily and always appreciate help and donations.

Quito Club has joined forces with travel agents, tour operators, and the like to form Amigos del Tourismo.Our mission is to improve safety and security for travelers in Ecuador. We compile crime statistics, propose solutions such as increasing the number of police in high crime areas, and examine the role of the many Ecuadorian tourist associations. In the past months, we have met with the head of the Tourist Police as well as the new Minister of Defense. We're excited at the prospect of making headway in this area! We are always interested in meeting people who'd like to volunteer at the Quito Clubhouse—a great place that offers many rewards! We accept volunteers on an individual basis, so stop in if you're interested.

Saludas,
Quito Clubhouse Staff



Lima Club

We're pleased to announce the arrival of two babies to friends of the Lima Clubhouse:

1. José Alejandro, born July 23 to Mary Romero, master chef and mom to the Lima staff, and her beau, Jose.

2. Milagros Alexandra, born August 13 to Ofelia, Lima's secretary of ten years, and Josef van Zadel.

Our congratulations and warm wishes to Ithaca office manager Saoirse McClory on her July 18 marriage to Larry Hirschberger. A long and beautiful life to both!

Mt. Huayna Picchu, closed since the fire in and around Machu Picchu in September 1997, reopened in August. Not for those with weak nerves and a fear of heights!

In early August Parque Nacional Huascaran established new fees. Since then, the Park has been overcharging one-day trekkers to Llanganuco S/65 (US$20), the government-approved fee for multiple-day trekkers and adventure tourism excursions. The Club supports entrance fees that raise money to maintain the Park, but pay the correct fee if you'll only going on a one-day excursion.

Surf's up! The 1998 Surf Americas Expedition stopped by the Lima Clubhouse in mid-May. We got to know Rafaela Sa, Beto Franco and expedition leader Alberto Castro when they parked their Toyota outside the Clubhouse. Our thanks to these three Brazilians were kind enough to give the Club more than 100 pages of valuable information they had gathered en route between San Diego, California and their homes in Rio and Bahia. For more information on the Expedition, contact the Lima office.

Our gratitude also goes to Club members Nathan Chips for a presentation on freedom of the press in Peru, and Lev Michael and Chris Beer of the Cabeceras Aid Project, who gave a presentation on their work with recently contacted indigenous peoples of the jungle lowlands in Peru. To learn more, contact Cabaceras directly at sanksewa@hotmail.com. We must not forget Carlos Dall'Orso, whose numerous handcarries greatly benefitted the Club, and to Bill Glick for his continued advice, support, and help.

The SAEC is currently seeking volunteers and long-term staff. If you'd like to find more about life on the inside of this splendid organization, please contact Lima, Quito, or Ithaca. It's an experience you'll never forget.

To our good friends who have moved on, our fond farewell. These include: Ankur Tohan and Adam Kolff, who put in countless hours for The Mountain Institute. They are both pursuing graduate studies in geography at the University of Madison and the University of Boulder, respectively. Andrew Davie departed after a successful year guiding for GAP Adventures. We will miss his monthly appearances. George Lau finished his field research and is preparing his dissertation in archeology at Yale University. Our good friend and part-time staffer Pepe Dijkstra returned to Holland in July to be office manager for a fledgling software company. Good luck, Pepito! And finally, the Lima Club is saying goodbye to Janice Davies who's returning to Canada after nearly a year of service. During her tenure in Lima, Janice improved office organization and documentation—key elements that helped the SAEC grow within Peru. Thanks, Yanis! We miss you!

—Lima Office Staff

Mike and Pauline Truman (Mike.Truman@bbsrc.ac.uk):

Trekking from Cabanaconde to Chivay in the Colca Canyon, Department of Arequipa, Peru:

The last leg of this trail has been destroyed, and the path terminates at a point where you can see the green chacras of Piucirca below on the far bank of the Colca River. There is a temporary path that switchbacks down to the river. Until repairs are made on the old path, you must cross the river and continue along the far bank to Puente Colgado.

There is a shallow bank where you can wade out into the middle of the river and toward the edge of the Piucirca chacras on the far bank. Wade out along this bank and walk along it. It is very shallow. Continue for about 50 meters, then wade across the main part of the river. The river isn't deep (up to the tops of your thighs), but the current is strong and the river bed painfully stony. Keep your boots on!

If you need water, get it here; after Piucirca, the water is loaded with silt.

Tim Wenzel (ttwenzel@citynet.net):

Parque Nacional Henri Pittier

in northwest Venezuela is an easy trip from Maracay by car. At the Playa Escondida area, drive up to the radio antenna for a steep drive and an incredible view. Do NOT slow down until you reach the top! While grinding along at top RPM, a group flagged me down urgently. When I stopped, they told me to be sure to drive in first gear—which, of course, I was already doing! But because I lost momentum, I had to roll all the way down and get a running start.

Finding vegetarian food in this area was, as usual, a bit of a problem. Lots of meat and seafood dishes, but Italian food is available, and usually you can order items á la carte. I found plenty of beans and rice along the coast but not inland. Fruit is plentiful. Bottled water and soda are everywhere. As for beer, I preferred Regional in bottles, but the ubiquitous Polar is excellent, too.

Do you have any tips you picked up during your travels? File trip reports! Mail us at South American Explorers Club, 126 Indian Creek Road, Ithaca, NY 14850 or e-mail us at tips&notes@samexplo.org. See your name in print and bask in other members' thanks and admiration.

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WHITE WATER IN ECUADOR

Handbook Jubilee

Daniel Buck

A quarter century ago, I slipped into Brazil by the back door. An express bus shot me across Venezuela, west to east. From Ciudad Guyana, I caught a bus south to El Dorado, where I hitched a ride on a cement truck through the grass seas of the Gran Sabana to Santa Elena at the Brazilian border. I flagged another cement truck and then a bus, which carried me to Caracaraí, a dusty river village where the highway then ended. Several times a week, once a week, or once every couple of weeks, depending on your luck and the level of the river, barges piled high with cargo (mostly empty beer bottles from the village bars) slid south from Caracaraí down the winding channels of the Rio Branco to the Rio Negro and on to Manaus.

Daniel Buck is an SAE *contributing editor.*

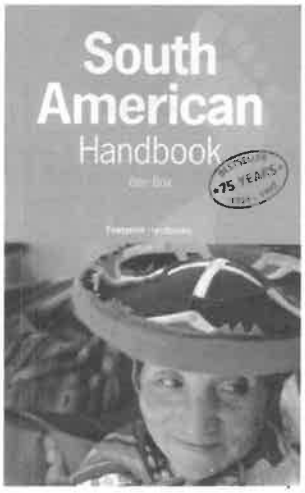
The Baedekers were famous for their richly detailed maps and plans.

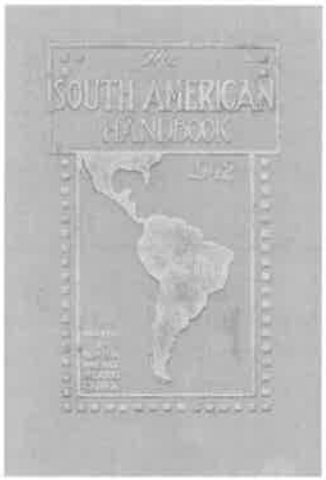
One drowsy afternoon in Caracaraí, while I was waiting for the next barge, an elderly German couple descended from the daily bus from Boa Vista carrying a small suitcase, a camera bag, and the *South American Handbook*. The next day a Dutch family of four drove into town on the first leg of a journey around the continent via Volkswagen Sirocco. Propped on the dashboard was the *South American Handbook*.

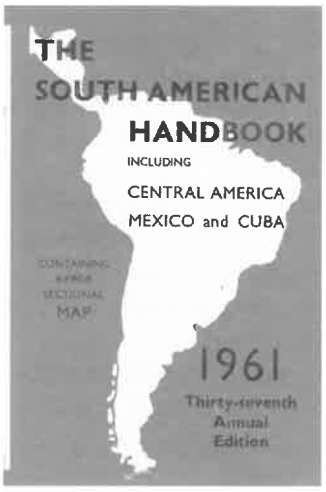
The sight of those Germans and Dutch arriving in that end-of-the-road up-river village, *Handbook*s in hand, stuck in my mind and inspired me to later write that South American-bound travelers "would no sooner venture forth without their *Handbook* than they would leave behind their passports."

The Nazis used *Norway, Denmark, Iceland, Spitzbergen* to plot their invasion of Norway.

The word *handbook* is said to have been coined by English publisher John Murray II, who in 1836 published his son's account of a European tour: *A Handbook for Travellers on the Continent*. It was the first of more than sixty guidebooks issued under the Murray imprint. Previous guides were either roadbooks, listing without comment the tolls and inns along the highways, or collections of travel essays—what today we call literary travel. The Murray handbook was completely different because it combined routes and recommendations for hotels and restaurants with historical and cultural information. Murray was eclipsed in the late 1800s by the Baedeker guidebooks, which covered







Europe, the Near and Middle East, and the United States. The Baedekers were famous for their richly detailed maps and plans. (T.E. Lawrence relied on Baedeker's *Palestine and Syria* during his Middle Eastern adventures, and the Nazis used *Norway, Denmark, Iceland, Spitzbergen* to plot their invasion of Norway.)

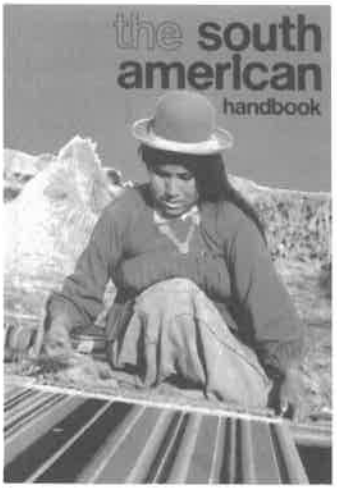
The *South American Handbook* was launched in 1924 and will celebrate its diamond jubilee in 1999. Although the guide follows the annotative style blazed by Murray and Baedecker, its immediate predecessor, the *Anglo-South American Handbook*—founded in 1921 by William Henry Koebel, a prolific writer of the era on Latin American subjects—was a manual for commercial travelers, not tourists. After Koebel's death, the book was purchased by the Royal Mail Steam Packet Co., the pre-eminent steamship service to Latin America, and appeared in 1924 as the *South American Handbook*. In 1929, a World War I veteran from Wales, Howell Davies, came on as editor, a post he held for a marathon four decades. The Royal Mail's influence can be seen even as late as 1960, when the "Travel in South America" commentary still focused on passenger steamers. (Not that air service was ignored. As far back as 1925, when passenger air travel was but a fledgling, a *Handbook* patron endorsed flying from Barranquilla to Colombia's interior on the Sociedad Colombo-Alemana Transportes twice-weekly air mail service.)

peppered the editors with quirky, penetrating, caustic, and enthusiastic annotations, giving the book its salty appeal

In 1971, after the Royal Mail ceased it's passenger service to South America, John Dawson, the *Handbook*'s printer in Bath, England, bought the guidebook, rescuing it from all but certain demise. A new editor, John Brooks, entered the picture, and made a number of changes, chief among them a shift in focus from sea to air travel. Brooks, a banker by day and handbook editor by night and weekends, stayed at the helm until his sudden death at age 62 in 1989, at which point the present editor, Ben Box, took over.

Although airplanes displaced ships in the *Handbook*'s attentions, other traditions were maintained and improved. Kept in the field was the army of volunteer contributors, the *Handbook*'s readers, who had long peppered the editors with quirky, penetrating, caustic, and enthusiastic annotations, giving the book its salty appeal. The earliest editions had relied heavily on reports from the Royal Mail's network of agents, as well as from representatives of other enterprises, and extracts from government publications and commercial journals. (The 1925 edition does carry one eye-witness account, from American explorer M. Richard Marsh on "the presence of a blond Indian tribe with tawny flaxen hair and blue eyes in eastern Panamá, upon the upper Chucunaque River.") Brooks took the practice much further. He not only beseeched the readers for contributions, he festooned the text with their notes (anticipating by several decades the Internet's chat rooms), and cited their names in interminable acknowledgements.

With Box's ascension, the selection of maps, long a *Handbook* deficiency, grew dramatically. Early users had to make do with a single fold-out map of all of Latin America. Now they have a cartographic cornucopia to consult: More than 200 maps, grids, and plans of countries, cities, zones, and trekking trails.



1990
SOUTH AMERICAN HANDBOOK
SIXTY SIXTH EDITION
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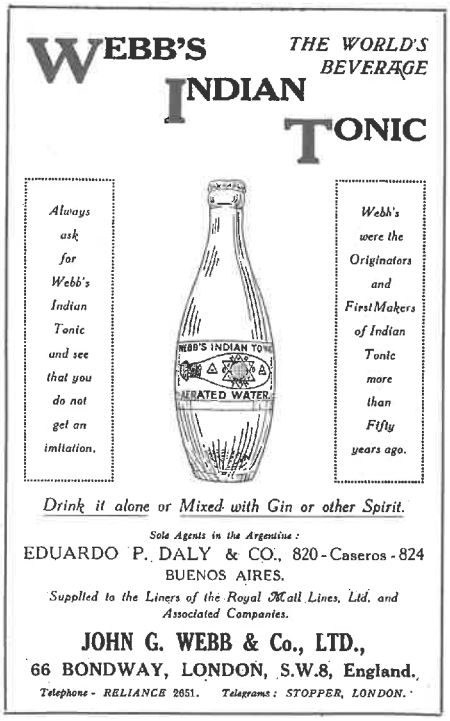
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Box and his editorial team have also presided over the guide's greening, a reflection of the changing outlook and interests of modern travelers. Trekkers and eco-tourists are now among the *Handbook*'s most loyal users. A 1998 passage on "Responsible Tourism" discusses not only the adverse impact tourists can have, but cautions that not all travel agencies advertising themselves as "green" are in fact environmentally sensitive. This increased awareness can be seen in the segment on the Brazil's Pantanal wildlife preserve (which was first brought to the *Handbook*'s attention in the early 1980s by alert readers). Several pages on touring the Pantanal, in the Mato Grosso region, are preceded by introductory remarks on flora and fauna, conservation, and choosing the right guide.

If the patriarch of South American guidebooks is feeling its 75 years, it doesn't show. Indeed, it's been remarkably virile of late, siring individual guides to Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador, and Peru, with more on the way. (In 1989, the *Handbook*'s publisher, now called Footprint Handbooks, began issuing volumes on countries and regions worldwide, from Tibet to East Africa, from Laos to Israel. In global coverage, though, Footprints is far behind that of its chief rival, the Australian-based Lonely Planet, which publishes more than 100 guides, atlases, phrase books, and the like.)

a book for the pocket and the traveling bag ...to bring first to the eye that information that the traveller most urgently requires

The *South American Handbook* and the *Mexico & Central America Handbook*, which became a separate tome in 1990, total 2,800 pages (printed on what is proudly described as "our now-famous 'bible' paper"), as compared to the 1924 inaugural volume, which covered the same universe in a single slender volume. Nonetheless, the purpose set forth by its first editor, J.A. Hunter, remains fulfilled. He wrote that he intended "a book for the pocket and the traveling bag...to bring first to the eye that information that the traveller most urgently requires."

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Some required information hardly changes. The 1924 guide warned steamship passengers to be on guard with their luggage:

It may not be superfluous to mention the desirability of locking trunks and bags securely. In especial, personal baggage should not be delivered into the hands of shore touts without being carefully locked in advance.

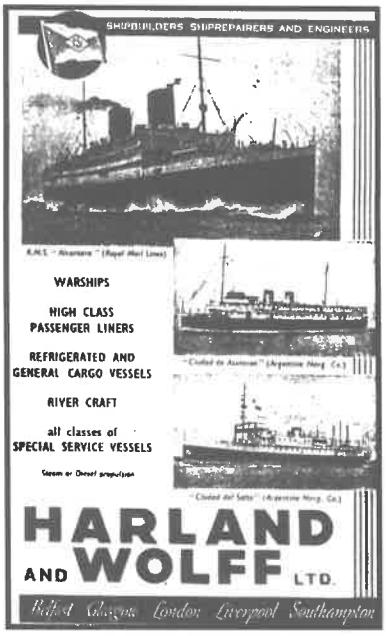
how to bribe a policeman so that it's not a bribe

The 1998 version *devotes* two pages to "Safety," cautionary advice on such topics as drugs, rape, and pickpockets. Travelers who find themselves suspects, not victims, are told how to bribe a policeman so that it's not a bribe: Ask him if you can pay an "on-the-spot fine."

Other tips have been overtaken by progress. "Choosing Pack Animals," a must-read section in the 1924 edition, but now long discarded, opened as follows:

In all the Latin American Republics, it is necessary to a greater or lesser degree to use mules, donkeys, burros, and horses for certain journeys. The traveller should be careful in his arrangements. The horses or mules should be inspected. Choice is not always possible, but experienced travellers find that by insistence they are often able to obtain *bestias* of more endurance than others from the same owner.

Travellers were also alerted that the "*caminos de herradura* run so close to the mountain side that trunks are often damaged; special sizes of trunks are needed for mule back."



The modern *Handbook* has not a word on selecting mules but offers scads of advice on car hire and motoring, motorcycling, and air travel, not to mention hiking and trekking, which though possible, were not customary modes of locomotion in the 1920s.

During World War II, the *Handbook* somehow scavenged enough paper to publish without interruption. And communications from its South American correspondents successfully evaded enemy torpedoes. The 1941 edition "owes its very existence to the efficiency of our shipping services," Howell Davies wrote, "and is, in its way, as positive proof of victory over the German submarine as anything that could be cited."

Flower children were encouraged "to moderate their hair and dress styles."

By 1973, the Age of Aquarius had finally caught up with the *Handbook*. "It is regrettable, but nonetheless true," the editors intoned, "that a prejudice has grown up among the authorities of several Latin America countries against young male travellers with long hair, beards, and hippy-style clothing." Flower children were encouraged "to moderate their hair and dress styles."

In the good old days, it was the lodging that was slovenly, not the lodgers. Accommodations in rural areas fell into a sorry trio of categories: *tambos*, *mesones*, and *fondas*. Tambos, the best of the bad lot, were "small primitive inns." The traveler was advised to carry his own hammock, bed linen, mosquito netting, and tinned food. Mesones or "taverns of an inferior kind," were to "be avoided at all costs," and fondas, an inferior version of a meson, were "still more to be shunned."

Huaraz, in Peru's Callejon de Huaylas, had but two hotels—the Italia and the Ancash—worth mentioning in the 1924 edition (what space they occupied in the three-tiered bad lot was not said). Today more than 30 hostelries are recommended, ranging from the spiffy, Swiss-run Hostal Andino to a slew of nice, noisy, charming, basic, popular *alojamientos* favored by the trekking crowd. Huaraz merited only four lines in 1924. Today, the city's attractions fill six pages, with another eight devoted to the villages and hiking trails of the surrounding cordilleras.

The first *Handbook* dispatched all of Peru in 21 pages, half of which recited commercial regulations and inventoried natural resources, among them coca. Cocaine was confected at Huánuco, in the Huallaga River Valley. Most of the annual production, some 3,300 pounds, was exported to Japan. The most recent edition favors Peru with 212 pages (commencing with the whimsical fact that the country is twice the size of France). The Huallaga Valley is still verdant with coca bushes, but the United States has replaced Japan as the number-one cocaine customer.

Thin or thick, reportorial or whimsical, down through its 75 years the *Handbook* has been praised by such literary vagabonds as Graham Greene, Alastair Reid, John Gunther, Paul Theroux (South American travel repelled him, but he found the *Handbook* an affable companion), John Hemming, and Michael Palin, who writes in the 1999 edition:

I carried the volume in my bag from Cape Horn to Cartagena and consulted it every night for two and a half months. And I wouldn't do that for anything else except my hip flask.

American ethnologist Karen Olsen Bruhns once volunteered a testimonial both piquant and utilitarian, declaring that not only did she find the "contents extremely useful, but the book is just the right size and weight for killing errant cockroaches."

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Bright Paradise: Victorian Scientific Travelers

Peter Raby

Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1997. 276 pages, paperback.

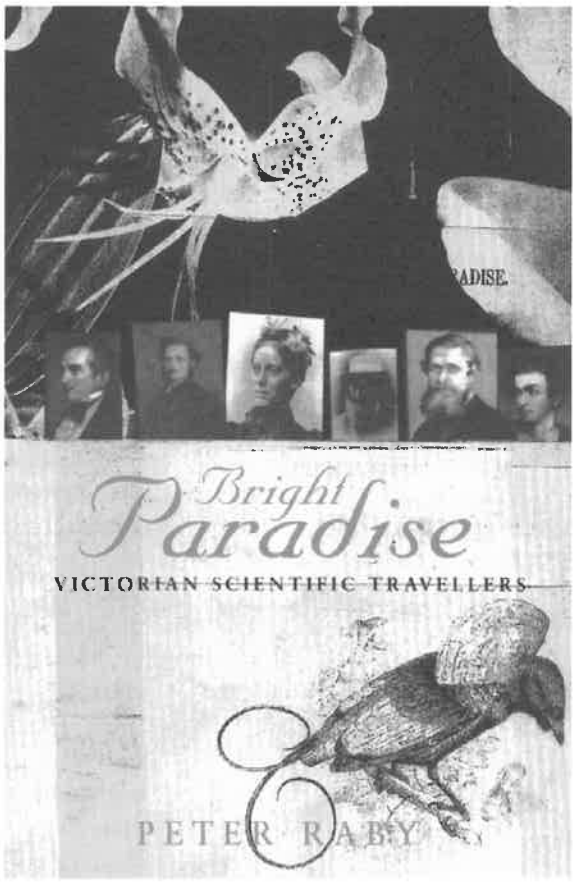
An axiom among modern travel writers is that the world is so small, so easily toured, that no adventures remain. Actually, that's hardly a modern lament. In the preface to his 1847 book, *A Voyage Up the River Amazon*, American naturalist William H. Edwards wrote that "the 'universal Yankee nation' has so nearly exhausted all the whereabouts which modern facilities for locomotion have brought within its reach." This being so, Edwards wondered why travelers have "so seldom betaken themselves to our Southern continent." They soon did.

Inspired by Edwards's narrative, as well as the earlier accounts of Alexander von Humboldt and Charles Waterton, a raft of English naturalists soon made the Amazon their home. Peter Raby's *Bright Paradise* is the gripping, well-told story of the men and women who sailed off to the Amazon, as well as to Africa, and the Near and Far East during the mid to late-Nineteenth Century, the golden age of scientific travel and exploration.

These ventures were not brief jaunts. The scientists were gone not months, but years—Alfred Russell Wallace was four years on the Amazon and eight in Malaysia. Henry Walter Bates slogged up and down the Amazon for eleven years, and Richard Spruce traversed Amazonia, plus Peru and Ecuador, absenting himself from home and family for fourteen long years.

Yet the Brazilian rainforest was but a friendly skirmish compared to Equatorial Africa. Many explorers, including Mungo Park and Richard Lander, died. Those who survived returned ravaged by disease and exhaustion. Venturing into the African interior was so daunting that explorers periodically sent their journals out by messenger so that in the likely event they didn't survive, their reports would.

Victorian-era scientific travelers, Raby astutely points out, were driven not only by scientific inquiry, but by commerce, religion, and imperialism. And science and commerce merged. "Europeans regarded the rest of the world, or at least its most fertile areas," Raby writes, "as an extended farm, and were constantly looking for useful and financially viable species to transplant: tea from



China to India, rubber from Brazil to South-east Asia." An amateur botanist could make a reasonable living collecting plants and shipping them back home. Wallace and Spruce even had agents who handled the sales of their specimens to collectors, greenhouses, and museums in England. Joseph Hooker, botanizing in Nepal, grumbled that the area was crawling with plant-hunters—much like the tourists of today who complain about the crowds of tourists. Some throngs never change.

—Daniel Buck

The Mystery of Easter Island

Katherine Routledge

Mystic Travellers Series, Adventures Unlimited Press: Kempton, Reprint, 1998. 393 pages plus index, paperback. $16.95

This book was originally published in London by Hazell, Watson and Viney (1919) as "*The Mystery of Easter Island: The Story of an Expedition* by Mrs. Scoresby Routledge." In 1978 it was reprinted by AMS Press, Inc., New York in a hard-cover version. It seems to have gone out-of-print quickly, and to find a rare copy of this book in some dusty used-book store was a prize indeed. Now Adventures Unlimited Press has reproduced *The Mystery of Easter Island* and once more Rapanuiphiles can have a copy for their libraries.

The text of this new version is a duplicate of the AMS Press reprint; the quality of the photographs is very good, in many cases superior to those in the AMS version. The only difference seems to be in the seven original fold-out illustrations that have been condensed into

two-page spreads. That, and the back ten pages which are devoted to "The Adventures Unlimited Catalog." But more about that later.

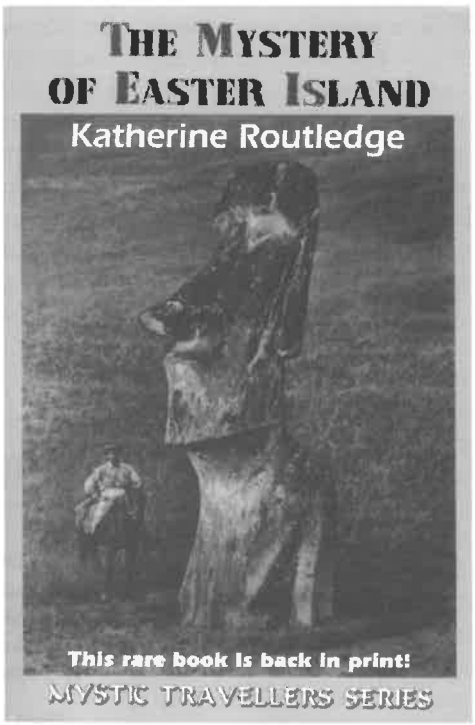
This remarkable book is a classic of its kind and can be read on many levels from casual armchair traveler to scholar. Part I of the book concerns the voyage to Easter Island from England and includes stops at Brazil, Argentina, Patagonia and Chile, with descriptions of those places in 1914. The last part, pages 305-391, describes the homeward voyage. The central section, Part II, deals with Easter Island.

Who was Katherine Routledge? Born in 1866 in the north of England, Katherine Maria Fell Pease was educated at Oxford from 1891-1895, at a time when women were not allowed to be official members of the University. She studied history, and some of her colleagues and teachers were among the most accomplished scholars of the time. With her Aussie husband, William Scoresby Routledge, she worked in Africa and they authored an account of the Akikuyu. Encouraged by the British Museum, they decided to sail off to the Pacific to study Easter Island. Upon discovering there was no way to get there, they built and equipped their own yacht, the *Mana*. After being at sea for 13 months, they finally arrived at Easter Island on March 29, 1914. Katherine Routledge was 48 years old. According to her photograph, she was a handsome woman with firm chin and level gaze. Obviously she was well-bred and proper but, at the same time, she was a staunch suffragette (she arranged to have newspapers sent to every available port along the way, including the papers of two Societies for Women's Suffrage).

On the island, Katherine explored on horseback, relished camping out in a tent, and being at one with nature. She enjoyed the sounds of the waves thundering against the coast, the glory of waking to the sun, air, and dewy grass, or the sight of a full moon over the sea. She braved a dangerous surf to visit Motu Nui (an offshore islet). The more I study the history of Easter Island, the more impressive her work seems. One might assume that because the information she collected was late in time—1914-15—errors had likely crept in. But time and again I am amazed

by her insightful take on things. She learned the language so was able to gather much information first hand instead of always going through an interpreter.

She had a good eye for detail and obviously was



Continued on page 59

moved by what she saw and often poetically recorded: "In Easter Island the past is the present, it is impossible to escape from it; the inhabitants of today are less real than the men who have gone; the shadows of the departed builders still possess the land. Voluntarily or involuntarily the sojourner must hold commune with those old workers; for the whole air vibrates with a vast purpose and energy which has been and is no more. What was it? Why was it?" When writing about her camp at the foot of the statue quarry, she stated, "The whole situation was not only one of striking beauty, but brought with it an indescribable sense of solemnity. Immediately above the camp towered the majestic cliff of Rano Raraku, near at hand were its mysterious quarries and still erect statues; on the coast below us, quiet and still, lay the overturned images of the great platform of Tongariki, one fragment of which alone remains on its base, as a silent witness to the glory which has departed. The scene was most wonderful of all when the full moon made a track of light over the sea, against which the black mass of the terrace and the outline of the standing fragment were sharply defined; while the white beams turned the waving grass into shimmering silver and lit up every crevice in the mountain above." I can attest that these descriptions are not hyperbole. Easter Island really *is* like that, and *The Mystery of Easter Island* is the sort of book to read while sitting atop the amazing quarry at Easter Island, surrounded by ghosts of the past.

Katherine's field notes, believed lost for fifty years, were rediscovered a short time ago (in the 1980s). As difficult as they are to read due to her nearly illegible handwriting, they yield wonderful asides about her informants and other matters. One intriguing part of Katherine's life concerns her relationship with her husband. There seems to have been some coolness between Katherine and Scoresby, who spent most of his time in Chile while she worked on the island. According to Professor Charles Love, who edited her notes, "Prior to a certain circumstance on Easter Island, she notes what he does almost daily, then suddenly never mentions him again. Granted, he does leave the island, but she hardly notes his return...save in her book, and...nothing after that." Whatever happened to cool their relationship, no clue now exists, and her personal letters have not been located.

The Routledge's returned to the Pacific in 1921 and sailed to Rapa Iti, Ra'ivavae, and Mangareva, spending twelve months at the latter island. They returned separately to England. During this trip, Katherine collected some 50,000 words of legends and other findings from Mangareva. These notes have disappeared.

On December 11, 1924, The London Daily Graphic reported on a poignant interview with Katherine Routledge: "Mrs. Scoresby Routledge...appreciated the incongruity of the weather yesterday when she looked out of the window at the fog and talked about sitting on a coral strand while a native woman told her ancient legends about the islands of the Pacific. I have just started seriously to work on my new book, she said, which is to be based on the results of the last expedition...to the Pacific. I should like to be back there again, said Mrs. Routledge, still looking out the window..."

She died a decade later in 1935, aged 69. The new book was never written. She never returned to her beloved islands. When she arrived at Mangareva, Routledge was in a unique position to make comparisons with what she had observed at Easter Island. It is tantalizing to imagine her lost notes as being discovered someday in a long-forgotten box in someone's attic. In the meantime, readers can savor early times on Easter Island through her eyes.

Ah, but back to the ten page catalog of Adventures Unlimited at the back of the book. Here we find Katherine and her excellent book sandwiched between books about Atlantis, Mu, Lemuria, UFOs, Antigravity (huh?), Free Energy, and (I am not making this up) Extraterrestrial Archaeology. Do not be deterred, dear reader, by the company Katherine is keeping these days. We are grateful to have her book in print again, and she herself would likely be amused by her new companions.

—Georgia Lee

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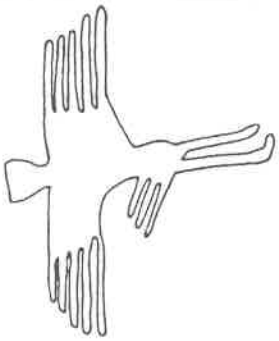

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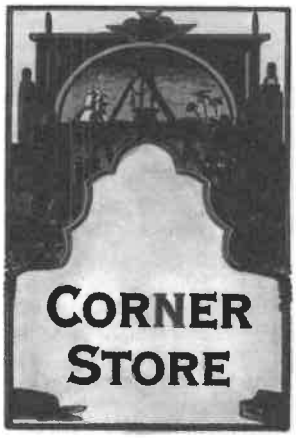

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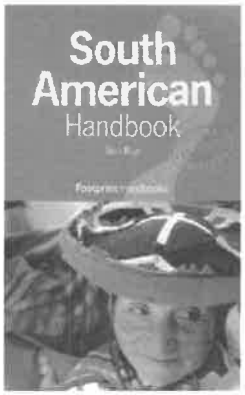

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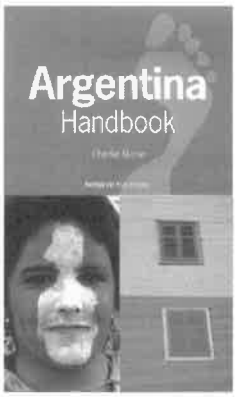

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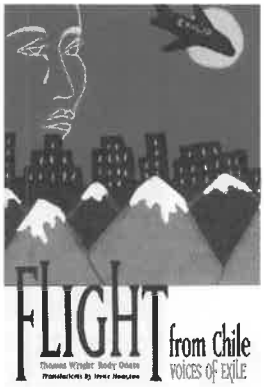

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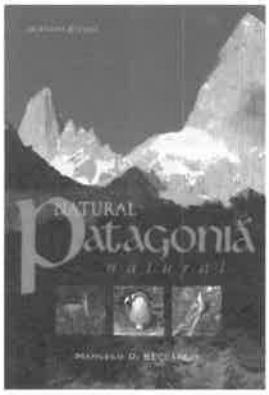

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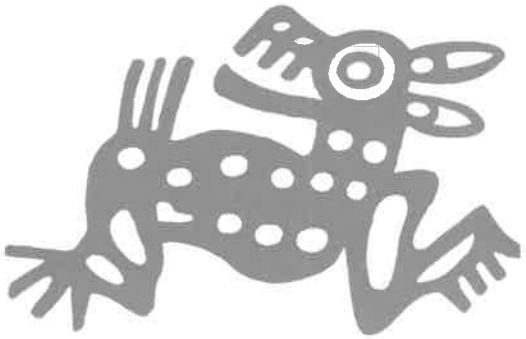

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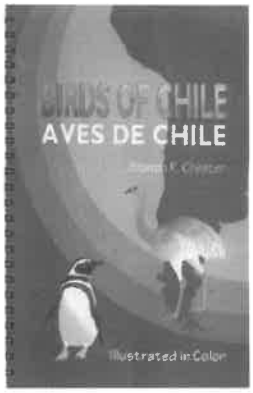

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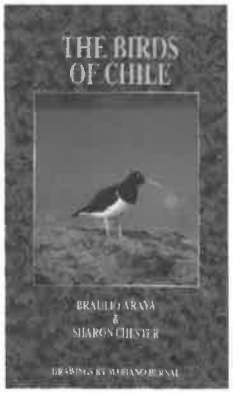

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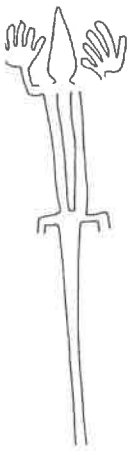

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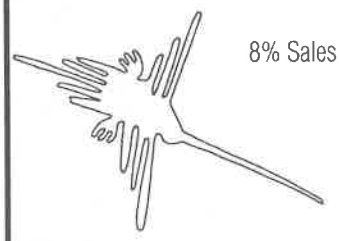

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